"Hands up, and be quick about it." Came a command from the rear. Page 10.

With Sherman to the Sea

A Boy's Story of General Sherman's Famous March and Capture of Savannah

By JAMES OTIS

Author of
"Across the Delaware," "With Lafayette at Yorktown," "With Washington at Monmouth," "With Grant at Vicksburg," Etc.

WITH FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS
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WITH SHERMAN TO THE SEA

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FOREWORD

I HAVE just had brought to my attention a story concerning the siege of Vicksburg, which was written by Richard J. Studley, of the 46th Maine Volunteers, who hailed from Malden, in that State, and, as may be supposed, am flattered by his description of myself.

It is true that I was able to render him no slight assistance on two occasions when he stood in sore need of a friend inside the Confederate lines, but there is a question in my mind as to whether he did not magnify the services, for the part which I played was not different from that which any lad would have acted toward another of about his own age under similar circumstances.

To me Dick's story was most entertaining, bringing back to memory as it did many comparatively trifling details which had been forgotten by me, and enabling me to live over again those days when all the world was before us, to be conquered for our special benefit.

That which surprised me greatly in the tale was that he brought it to a close with the capture of Vicksburg, for surely we were thrown much in each other's company, owing to the varying tide of war, until that famous march of Sherman's to the sea was ended with the capture of Savannah, and stood side

by side more than once when it seemed certain death must come speedily to both.

A good friend was and is Dick Studley, one on whom a fellow can depend for backing, however great the danger, and with whom it is pleasant to be, however distressful the circumstances.

It is not in my mind that I can make of our adventures such a tale as did Dick, when he told the story of being with Grant at Vicksburg, but it should be possible for me to set down what he said and did while I was with him, for I would have the lad's work during the long, cruel war put into such shape that all may know him for the brave, true-hearted chap that he is. Therefore I count on trying to write of what was done by both of us during that famous march to the sea, when we of the South saw each day the Cause growing weaker and weaker, and knowing that, despite all efforts, it must soon end in dire disaster to us who had struggled to the best of our ability.

Should I fail in my purpose, let it be borne in mind that I made the attempt only in order that the little lad from Maine, who was my friend at the time we were enemies, may have the credit due him and which he was too modest to claim for himself.

ROBERT YARDLEY.

WITH SHERMAN TO THE SEA

CHAPTER I

HOWELL COBB'S PLANTATION

It was about the middle of November, in the year 1864, when I, Robert Yardley, lieutenant Company B, 98th Mississippi, C. S. A., was discharged from the hospital at Milledgeville, in the State of Georgia, with a furlough of thirty days, during which time the physicians believed I might be able to regain the strength lost during an illness which was more vexatious than dangerous.

My military career in the Confederate Army had been begun eighteen months previous, when I enlisted at Vicksburg, being in a certain degree forced into the service, although not quite sixteen years of age, because of having given aid to a Yankee lad by the name of Dick Studley, thereby arousing suspicions that I was not so entirely devoted to the Cause as a Southern-bred boy should have been.

My friends knew full well that I was true to the Confederacy, and those best acquainted with all the details of the affair understand that no blame could be attached to me for what I then did. It is not my purpose to make any explanation of the matter here;

it is sufficient to say that on a certain night, when the Federal gunboats and transports ran past the batteries at Vicksburg, I came across a small lad who had swum ashore from the wreck of the *Henry Clay,* and, instead of delivering him up to the authorities as a prisoner of war, took him to the cave in which I was then living.

He was a year my junior, a drummer-boy in a regiment from Maine, and surely there was no wrong done the Confederacy when I did what I might to save him needless suffering; but the final result was that it seemingly became necessary for me to enlist. Whether I have since done my full duty in the army is shown by the fact that I now hold a commission as lieutenant, although my seventeenth birthday has but just passed.

General Howell Cobb is my mother's cousin, and, his plantation being near Milledgeville, I went there to recruit my strength, being so feeble that only with difficulty could I walk half a mile.

Atlanta had been occupied by the enemy under General Sherman, but we of Georgia had no idea the Federal Army would come further down the State, consequently I believed myself far removed from scenes of hostilities until the day when the word came that the Yankees were moving southward.

Even then we all believed Columbia or Augusta was the point at which a blow was to be struck, although General Cobb took the precaution of moving the most valuable of his household goods, together with the more likely slaves, to Milledgeville, believing the property would be more safe there than on the plantation, where were none but old negroes to look after it.

As for me, I preferred to remain in the country.

There were people enough left on the place to wait upon me, and I had the entire house to myself, which was much to my liking.

The blow came suddenly, like a bolt of lightning from a clear sky. Three days had passed without my having had any news concerning either army, and I was in the stable seeing to it that the old groom attended properly to my favorite horse, when two men in faded blue uniforms, and having all the earmarks of stragglers, entered the building swaggeringly.

"Where did you come from?" I asked, believing them to be some of our own people, for it was not unusual at this time to see Confederates wearing Yankee uniforms which had been taken from prisoners.

"We're from Uncle Billy's army, an' are lookin' for rations, horses, cattle or any blessed thing that may come in handy," one of the men replied as he pulled open the mare's mouth to see her teeth.

"Uncle Billy!" I repeated angrily. "What do you mean by speaking so disrespectfully? Who is your commander?"

"General William T. Sherman," and the fellow grinned as if he had begun to understand that I was in ignorance concerning the movements of the Federal forces. "Didn't you know we was takin' a little trip for our health through Georgia?"

Even then I did not fully realize all the facts, but asked like a simpleton:

"Where is General Sherman's army? Has it left Atlanta?"

"Wa'al, I reckon it has, seein's how we foragers can't be more'n two miles ahead of the advance guard."

"Two miles!" I repeated as if stupefied. "Are the Yankees comin' this way?"

"I reckon the whole force will camp hereabouts this afternoon, seein's how this 'ere place is about the limit of the day's work. That's a likely lookin' mare, an' I guess you'll be sorry to part with her?"

I was literally stunned by the statement that a Federal army was so near at hand, and, without giving heed to my words, replied:

"There is no question of my partin' with her. I don't intend to give her up."

"When you Johnnies take prisoners do you allow 'em to keep their saddle-hosses?" the man asked with a leer as he leveled his musket at my head, while the other fellow stood at the door of the stable as if to prevent escape.

Then it was that I realized fully the misfortune which had overtaken me. While I lounged around the plantation, recruiting my strength in the belief that I could soon be able to strike another blow for the Cause, the enemy had been advancing until the chances were that I would soon be shut up in a Northern prison, there to remain eating my heart out while those with whom I had marched shoulder to shoulder were winning laurels for themselves.

These thoughts, which passed through my mind as does a flash of lightning across the dark sky, nerved me to do that which a few seconds previous I would have believed impossible.

At my side a hay-fork stood against the wall. Half turning as if to go to the rear of the stable, I seized the fork, and, having thus put the soldier off his guard ever so slightly, I leaped upon him.

With the awkward weapon I struck down the man's musket and almost at the same instant was on

the mare's back. The old groom, whether in order to aid me or because of being so bewildered by the suddenness of my attack as not to be wholly conscious of what he did, unloosed the halter from the ring, and before the enemy had time to put forth a hand I was riding at full speed at right angles with the main road.

A bullet whistled past my head. Five seconds later came another, and then I knew there was nothing more to fear from the soldiers' guns until they could be reloaded, and by that time I should be beyond range.

Unfortunately I had not strayed very far from the house since my arrival, therefore was wholly in ignorance of the surrounding country, but I had a dim idea that my horse was taking me directly toward a swamp which extended four or five miles on either side of the small creek which marked the western boundary of the plantation.

With two of the enemy in the stable and an army on the highway at the north and northwest, I had no choice of roads, but must ride at a venture in the hope that it might be possible to find a path at the edge of the swamp, leading in the direction of Milledgeville.

Before I had fairly shut out the plantation buildings from view it was possible to hear, far in the distance, that which told of the approach of the army, and I knew that the ragged men in blue who spoke of their commander as "Uncle Billy" had told me no more than the truth.

Then suddenly we were come to the end of our road, the mare and I having arrived at the edge of the swamp. It was evident we could go no further in this direction, or even southward, save by retrac-

ing our steps, and I sat gazing at the barrier before me, wherein most likely many a slave had gone to his death while seeking, as I was, a road to freedom.

"I might as well have remained in the stable an' taken matters comfortably, since there seems nothin' for it save to count myself a prisoner to the Yankees at the very time when the Confederacy needs the services of every man and boy within the lines," I said half to myself, wondering meanwhile if it would not be as well to ride back and surrender quietly.

Then came a low, sharp command from the rear:

"Hands up, an' be quick about it!"

It goes without saying that I obeyed on the instant, for in those days men were not slow to pull the trigger when they had a living target.

"I had an idea you couldn't get very far in this direction, an' it seems that our maps are mighty near correct," the same voice, which had in it a familiar ring, cried, and, turning suddenly, I saw, mounted on a powerful iron-gray horse, one clad in the uniform of a lieutenant whom I believed I had met before.

"You an' I seem to be fortunate in capturin' each other," I said with as much of cheeriness in my tone as could be assumed on the instant.

"Who—what—— Why, it's Bob Yardley!"

"The very same, Dick Studley, an' under almost any other circumstances I'd be mighty glad to see you."

"You are glad now," the lad cried laughingly as he leaped from the horse to take both my hands in his. "When the foragers told me that a Johnnie had ridden down this way, I little guessed who it was I proposed to capture. But I *am* glad to see you

again, Bob Yardley! What's the matter? Have you been wounded?"

"Doin' time in the hospital just when I was most needed, an' came out to General Cobb's plantation to pick up a little more strength before goin' back to the regiment. So you're with Sherman's army, eh? And a lieutenant?"

"Even as you are, Bob. We got hold of some Confederate newspapers while in Atlanta, an' I learned by them that you had been promoted. Say, this looks like a big country while you study the maps, but it seems small when you think how often you an' I have met accidentally. Haven't you yet come to believe that yours is a Lost Cause?"

"We're not whipped yet, Dick, even though your people have given us some mighty hard knocks, an'—— But I'm not goin' to talk either politics or war just now. The question is, what are you countin' on doin' with me?"

"I declare I'd clean forgotten that you are my prisoner. Give me your parole, an' I'll see that you're made comfortable an' as happy as can be expected. We'll talk over the——"

"Never a parole out of me, Dick. I'd rather take the chances of goin' to a Yankee prison, as I reckon will be the case, than give over all power of makin' a break if I see an openin'."

"Now look here, Bob, you are foolish to keep an eye out for anything of that kind. I wish it was possible for me to make you understand that the Confederate who is taken prisoner now should consider himself a mighty fortunate chap, for there is no longer any show of his winnin'."

"But you can't make me believe anything of the kind, Dick Studley. Just at this time you of Sher-

man's army are puffed up a good bit because of the success which has attended the scheme of marchin' through Georgia. This State is but a small portion of the Confederacy, an' you will find that while gainin' ground here you are losin' it elsewhere. No, no, my boy, I won't give you my parole."

I could see that this refusal of mine cut the lad from Maine not a little. I flattered myself that acting the part of host toward me would give him as much pleasure as I would have in accepting his hospitality, but I was not minded to remain in his company any longer than might be absolutely necessary. Neither could he have persuaded me, so blind was I at the time, that our cause was in the desperate condition which I afterward knew to be the case.

Not only was he hurt because of my refusal, but disappointed and placed in an awkward position, as I could well understand. When I refused to give my parole it became necessary for him to hold me close prisoner, becoming responsible for my safe keeping, unless he was willing to turn me over to the care of strangers, and this I knew would have been far from agreeable to him.

"I do not know what to do with you, Bob," he said after remaining silent while one might have counted ten. "There is really no chance for you to escape, an' yet, in order to look after your comfort, I must give my word that you do not give us the slip."

"Better throw it up as a bad bargain, Dick, an' turn me over to the squad in charge of the prisoners, for I fancy you must have taken more than one since leavin' Atlanta."

"I won't do it, if for no other reason than because I remember the day in Vicksburg when you took so many chances rather than turn me into the pen," he

replied thoughtfully and added as a sudden thought came to him, "Give me your parole until we shall have entered Milledgeville, say forty-eight hours, an' perhaps in the meantime we will be able to cook up some kind of a scheme, thereby givin' Uncle Rube a chance to spread himself."

"Is he here?" I cried, remembering with pleasure the self-opinionated old farmer who believed that he, better than anybody else, was able to lead the Federal arms to victory.

"Aye, that he is," Dick replied with a laugh, "an' so are all the others of our detachment whom you know except poor 'Siah Fernald, who went home from Vicksburg with one leg."

Keen though I was to rejoin my comrades in the field, the desire to meet these odd people from Maine, who had been such very good friends of mine when I had previously been a prisoner in the hands of the Federals, was so great that I could not well resist the temptation.

During the short time Dick and I had been together I remembered having heard that General Wheeler, with a division of cavalry, should be somewhere in the vicinity, and provided I could retain possession of the mare when I gave the Yankees the slip, it was more than possible I would be able to find him.

By remaining with the Union forces forty-eight hours there was a good chance I could learn something more regarding his whereabouts, for General Sherman's scouts, if not a portion of his command, must certainly have come in touch with the troopers.

Therefore it was that I said with but little show of hesitation:

"I will do as you propose, Dick. Durin' the next

forty-eight hours you have my parole, but now the question is whether your commander will allow you to keep as a camp pet a Johnnie who counts on givin' you the slip at the first opportunity after his parole has expired."

"I am countin' that Major Hartley will do the trick for me," Dick replied with a laugh. "He should be favorably inclined toward you."

"It surely stands him in hand to do me a favor if he can," I said, thinking somewhat bitterly of how the major had urged me to do that which I had now become convinced was unbecoming a Confederate soldier.

We chatted about the past, Dick and I, referring again and again to that day at Vicksburg when I had acted the host and Uncle Rube, or Corporal Reuben Smart, to speak of him more respectfully, provided the food.

Both of us were so deeply interested in this recalling of the past as to be wholly unmindful of the flight of time until the forager who had attempted to take me prisoner in the stable came up breathless as if from rapid running.

"Oh, you are all right, are you, lieutenant?" he cried in a tone of relief "I had begun to think the Johnnie might have got the best of you, but it kinder looks as if you was old chums," he added, gazing in surprise first at one and then the other.

"An' so we are," Dick replied with a laugh. "It was really my turn to capture Lieutenant Yardley because of his havin' taken me prisoner when the 46th was nearabout Vicksburg." Then to me the lad added, "Come on, Bob; it's time I reported."

Leading our horses, we walked back toward the plantation buildings, where I stopped to get my sad-

dle and bridle, and then it was that I understood how completely General Sherman was devastating the country through which he marched.

Everywhere within the lines of the encampment were huge fires built of fence-rails and lumber torn from the buildings, while the foragers were ransacking corn-cribs, barns and even the cellar of the dwelling, stowing in their wagons large quantities of corn, beans, peanuts and molasses, for General Cobb did not have time to carry away any save the most valuable of his belongings.

In one of the larger log cabins of the plantation, that which had been occupied by the overseer, General Sherman's headquarters was established, and from the number of horses tethered nearabout it seemed to me that these Yankee officers must have gathered in for personal use all the blooded stock to be found on their line of march.

While I stood at a respectful distance holding the horses Dick went in search of Major Hartley, and a full half hour elapsed before he returned with a look of satisfaction on his face which told that the mission had not been in vain.

"Now we'll find the 46th, Bob, an' see what Uncle Rube's 'detachment' has on hand in the way of provisions. We're livin' high, turnin' up our noses at bacon an' hardtack, because thus far there has been no lack of chickens, fresh pork, sweet potatoes an' such other luxuries as are to be found in Georgia."

"In other words, you are eatin' us out of house an' home, eh?" I said in what I intended should be a cheery tone, but my heart was filled with bitterness as I saw everywhere around the invaders gorging themselves with stores which were sadly needed by our people.

Amid such an army as that under General Sherman's command it was not a simple matter to find the location of a single regiment, and when I came to learn the strength of this force which was marching through the most populous and fertile portion of the State, I began to have my first doubts as to the possibility of checking the invasion.

Near to 63,000 men, with sixty-five guns, each piece, caisson and forge drawn by four teams of horses; 2,500 wagons with a team of six mules to each, and 600 ambulances each with two horses. This train, the wagons loaded heavily with food and stores of every kind, together with the vast number of men, made up such an encampment as seemed enormous for what was, to my mind, hardly more than a raid.

While in the hospital I had heard that Sherman had met with reverse after reverse until his men were in a most pitiable condition, so far as regarded food and clothing, and therefore it had seemed to me absolutely certain that before the command got very far from Atlanta our people would succeed in bagging the entire army, but now I found quite the opposite state of affairs, and, as I have said, began to have doubts as to whether the Yankees were as impoverished as we had been made to believe. I even questioned whether our leaders did not intentionally misrepresent the true condition of the enemy.

However, I did not propose to go into any such question when I sat down to tell what I know concerning the part Dick Studley took in this march of Sherman's, and therefore, however bitter I may feel while thus going back in memory to those days, it shall be my aim to put aside personal grief and prejudices.

Dick finally succeeded in finding his regiment, and then it was I found it difficult to repress tears of gratitude, so hearty was the welcome which these men from Maine gave me. One would have said I was their best friend as they crowded around with words of joy and friendship, much to the surprise of their comrades who had never seen me, for of a verity it must have seemed strange that a party of soldiers in blue should receive so warmly one of the opposing force.

There was Uncle Reuben Smart, corporal of Company G, a most peculiar old man, whose good traits I hope I shall be able to picture in such fashion that the reader may feel acquainted with him; Stephen Stubbs, a small soldier who had left his work of house-painting to take up arms against us of the South; Jim Haley, who came from Meddybemps, and Isaiah Rich, who claimed Mattawamkeag as his home, a short, jolly-looking fellow, quite the reverse of what one would fancy a soldier should be.

Those who have read Dick Studley's story concerning his adventures while with Grant at Vicksburg can well fancy what we talked about and understand why it seemed necessary to ask many questions concerning each other.

"I've had you in mind the past two days, an' that's a sure sign I was goin' to come across you sooner or later," Uncle Rube said thoughtfully. "Though how it was to be brought about while we was on this 'ere junketin' trip was more'n I could make out," he added, and Steve Stubbs interrupted him by suggesting that if the "detachment" were to have some of General Cobb's chickens broiled for supper it was time to set about cooking them.

"So you still hold yourselves as a separate squad?"

I said laughingly, remembering full well the time when Uncle Rube claimed that his "detachment" was an organization separate and distinct from any company, regiment or corps.

"That we do, my boy, an' it's our right, seein's how we've taken on ourselves—meanin' we folks from Malden who enlisted in the 46th—the most of the work that has been done since we've been in the army."

"Do you think it necessary to give General Sherman as many points as you believed General Grant needed?" I asked, now forgetting my own troubles in the delight which was mine at being with these peculiar but right jolly people from Maine.

"Well, you see, it's like this," the old man replied in an argumentative tone. "Uncle Billy is kinder keepin' his crowd closer together than General Grant did, an' it stands to reason he has to, seein's how there's like to be a lot of you Johnnies snoopin' 'round to gather us in if we stray very far from the main army. Consequently I don't feel called upon to say so much about his doin's as I did when it looked like General Grant had lost a good many of his folks, an' us among the rest. Mind you, lad, I ain't sayin' but that if I had the handlin' of this 'ere army I would put 'em through straighter an' quicker than General Sherman's doin' it."

"But what about the chickens?" Steve Stubbs squeaked. "Are you goin' to have 'em or ain't you?"

"Look here, Stephen," and now Uncle Rube spoke sharply. "It strikes me that after I've foraged 'round to get all the luxuries of the land, you might turn to an' cook 'em without makin' so much talk. You'll never be the right kind of a soldier, Steve, till you get inter the way of humpin' yourself right up to

work. Tend to the chickens, an' I reckon Isaiah Rich better look after Bob Yardley's hoss. He can take Lieutenant Dick's, too, an' we'll kinder keep our belongings together, so to speak, instead of mixin' 'em up with the rest of Company G's property."

To me the oddest thing about this assumption of authority by the old man whose rank was only that of a corporal was the cheerfulness and promptness with which his unauthorized orders were obeyed by those who claimed membership in the "detachment."

Steve Stubbs set about dressing the chickens which had been confiscated, while Isaiah Rich tethered the horses near at hand and Jim Haley went to the commissary wagons for hay and grain.

It was a family party, and for the time being I, an enemy, had become a welcome member of it.

CHAPTER II

MILLEDGEVILLE

A MERRY evening did Uncle Rube's detachment make of it, really seeming to think I had cause for gratitude because of having been made prisoner, and while I joined in so far as might be with their mirth, my ears were open wide for any word which would give me information such as was necessary if I would escape.

Although bound by my parole to remain with the army during eight and forty hours, I could not prevent my thoughts from straying into the future as I considered this plan or that for joining General Wheeler's command, already beginning to believe I

had been foolish in agreeing to make no move toward escape even for the short time set.

Uncle Rube was explaining to me just how he could capture every Confederate in the field and thus put an end to the war in a twinkling, when Major Hartley came up to greet me, and once more I had proof that the Yankees did not look upon us of the South as personal enemies.

The major, like the members of the "detachment," spoke as if I had been remarkably fortunate because of having been taken prisoner at this particular time, and advised me to give my parole for an indefinite period, assuring me that the Confederacy was in the "last ditch."

As a matter of course I turned a deaf ear to his predictions, believing he had been deceived by his superiors, for I felt certain he would not deliberately tell a falsehood, particularly when all to be gained by it was my own comfort and well-being. He had the permission of the commander for me to remain on parole until the army left Milledgeville, if indeed it ever arrived there, but then I must be turned over as a prisoner of war if I still entertained an idea of trying to escape.

"I shall give you the slip, if it be possible, at the expiration of the time set," was my reply to his advice. "It is my duty, an' I am not willin' my comrades should have another opportunity of thinkin' perhaps I may be untrue to the Cause."

"If you look at it in that light, I have nothing more to say, my lad," he interrupted in a kindly tone. "The time is not far distant, however, when you will know that I have stated only the facts in the case."

Then, after chatting on this subject or the other with the men from Malden, the major left us, and

once more I asked myself if it could be possible that our people had been deceived as to the true situation.

It would please me well to set down all that was said and done during that evening when Uncle Rube acted as chief cook, host and commander, for I enjoyed myself thoroughly despite the many reasons I had for disquietude of mind, and when Dick and I crawled under the canvas fly, forced to lie very snug together in order to get the benefit of the apology for a shelter, it seemed much as if I was at home instead of among professed enemies.

When I closed my eyes in slumber it was not to open them again until a bugler near at hand sounded the reveille, the call being repeated here and there from different points of that vast encampment until the beating of drums drowned all other sounds.

It was not yet daybreak, but the division had been aroused thus early in order that it might take up the line of march promptly at five o'clock, in accordance with orders given the night previous.

While I remained lazily inside the blanket which had been loaned me by Steve Stubbs, camp-fires flashed out here, there and everywhere around until, apparently, as far as the eye could reach were flickering lights which told that more of General Cobb's property was being destroyed, in order that General Sherman's men might have a hot breakfast.

"I reckon we've got to turn out," Dick said with a yawn as he rose to a sitting posture. "It's too bad to waken a fellow before he has really begun to scoop in the proper amount of sleep."

"It's one of the penalties you must pay for the privilege of tryin' to whip us out of our boots," I said with a laugh as I sprang to my feet, all forebodings as to the future having vanished for the time being.

"Where are you goin'?" Dick asked curiously as I turned to walk away.

"To look after the mare. I must make certain she is bein' entertained as royally in this Yank camp as am I."

"Uncle Rube gave Jim Haley strict orders to look after her, so there's no need for you to trouble yourself."

"See here, Dick, it isn't any of my business, I know, but because we're such good friends I'm goin' to take the liberty of speakin' about it," and I went close by his side that my words might not be overheard. "Do you think it is wise to let that old man give orders regarding matters in camp while you, the lieutenant, are present? Isn't such a course likely to break in on the discipline?"

The lad from Maine laughed heartily as he replied:

"I don't reckon that I'm interferin' very much with the discipline, Bob. The 46th is sort of a family concern, an' when we're alone by ourselves, with none of the regimental officers near at hand to find fault, we run matters to suit ourselves. You saw enough of that at Vicksburg to know how it has been done."

"Aye, but then Uncle Rube was a corporal and the others of his detachment only privates," I said, speaking gravely in the belief that I was doing the lad a good turn. "Now you are a commissioned officer, an' it is not dignified to let one of the rank an' file dictate to you."

"It can't be helped, Bob," the lad replied, still treating the matter as a joke. "There isn't a man in the company who would think it strange to hear Uncle Rube givin' orders in my presence, while I

fancy it would be much like startin' a mutiny if I was to assert the rights of a lieutenant while the 46th was in camp. Let's go out an' make certain Jim Haley has done his work properly; if he hasn't, we'll report the neglect to the commander of the detachment."

There was no reason for finding fault with the way in which the horses had been cared for. Dick's gray and my mare had before them a plentiful supply of corn and fodder, and when this inspection was at an end Uncle Rube announced that "grub was ready for Reuben Smart's detachment."

Fried sweet potatoes, chickens broiled on the live coals, fragrant coffee and toasted hardtack made up such a bill of fare as would astonish any ordinary soldier, but these lads who were following Sherman across Georgia seemed to look upon it as a matter of course, and I even heard Steve Stubbs grumbling because it was impossible to get fresh fish.

"You're a good commissary, Uncle Rube," I exclaimed as the old man handed me my portion of the food on a tin plate. "It isn't very likely that I'll get but one more such breakfast, an' I shall remember this as something in the way of a marvel."

"Only one more, eh?" the old man said in surprise as he glanced quickly toward Dick. "How does it happen that you don't count on bein' with us any longer?"

"My parole expires to-morrow afternoon, an' I shall either succeed in makin' my escape or take up quarters with the other prisoners," I replied, speaking in as cheery a tone as could be assumed at the moment.

"An' are you sich an idjut as to hold out stiff-necked when you could be livin' on the fat of the land

with us folks from Malden?" Uncle Rube asked in a tone of astonishment. "It don't stand to reason that you're goin' to strike many of your friends anywhere near this army, even if you managed to give our people the slip. Be reasonable, my boy. Tell Uncle Billy you'll hang on here with us, an' we'll see you don't suffer any hurt on account of not havin' grub in plenty."

This was a good time in which to give Dick public notice that I counted on escaping at the first opportunity, and I said gravely:

"There's no need of sayin' that I'd like to stay with you fellows right well, if it could be done without turnin' my coat, but I'm bent on givin' you the slip, an' there's nothin' for it but to turn me over to the guards to-morrow afternoon."

Dick looked at me imploringly, and after a brief pause I repeated:

"I shall go if I can, an' in order to clear your own skirts it will be necessary to send me with the other prisoners. In my place, Dick, you'd do the same thing."

"Perhaps I should, but it doesn't seem possible as I look at the matter now," the lad replied, and then we all made an attack upon Uncle Rube's savory meal, the materials of which had been involuntarily provided by General Cobb.

While we were thus pleasantly engaged the division was being made ready for the march. The wagons had pulled out; the cattle, or "beef on the hoof" as the soldiers spoke of them, were being driven along the road, and more than one company was in line. Uncle Rube's "detachment" was not the last to report for duty, but never a member of it appeared

to be in any particular hurry, and the old man said to me as if thinking some explanation necessary:

"The amount of the story is, Bob, that we don't have to hustle 'round same's some of these raw recruits, 'cause everybody knows what Company G can do when it's rushed. I reckon my detachment has shown up better'n any other crowd of its size in this 'ere war, an' you can't hardly blame General Grant for bein' a bit jealous of us."

"So the commander is jealous, eh?" I asked with a laugh, wondering if the old man really believed everything he stated as a fact.

"I wouldn't like to say so right out, Bob, but between friends as we are, even if you will be so foolish as to stick to a gray uniform when everybody knows we've got the life licked outer the Johnnies, I'm mighty nigh certain Grant wishes we wasn't with the army."

"Why do you think so?"

"'Cause he's afraid the 46th will get their dander up an' end the war before he gets another chance to show hisself, an' we could do it, too, if we had a free hand. If he wasn't jealous, why didn't he send word for us to light out on our own account? That's the thing he oughter done after we showed in front of Vicksburg what we were made of."

"Then you really believe that the 46th could march straight through any army we of the South have in the field?"

"Wa'al, I'm not willin' to go quite so far as that, Bob, 'cause you see if I had the handlin' of 'em they wouldn't buck up ag'inst any very big crowd, but we could kinder snoop 'round the edges, so to speak, an' get your folks all in a snarl before they knew where they were at."

It was evident by the expression on the old man's face that he believed it would be possible for the 46th to do exactly as he had said, therefore I restrained my mirth, but could not resist the temptation to ask:

"If you've already licked the life out of the Johnnies, why would anything be gained by turnin' the 46th loose?"

The old man looked quizzically at me for a moment and then said as he strapped on his knapsack:

"It might be that we could clean up the pieces quicker'n Uncle Billy is doin', though I don't say that he ain't makin' a pretty decent job of it."

By this time Company G was ready to fall into line, and, astride my mare, I wheeled alongside of Dick's gray, for nearly every commissioned officer had mounted himself with horses taken from the country through which the army had passed, and thus in the regimental line I rode like an honored guest rather than a prisoner, but was careful to keep in mind the fact that if I adhered to my determination of not extending the parole, this might be the last ride I would ever take on the back of the little steed which had shared so many dangers and privations with me.

There was in my heart the hope, a very faint one, that our people might have been able to bring up a force sufficient to turn the Yankees aside from the capital of the State, even though it would not be possible to actually overpower them, and there were moments when I regretted having promised to make no effort at escape.

As we advanced, however, the faint ray of hope in my heart died out, for no alarm was given by the advanced columns, and Uncle Rube said more than once, not meaning to give me pain, but yet I could

not repress a certain bitterness of spirit when he spoke so confidently:

"It'll be the same old thing; we shall march inter the town with no more noise than is made by the niggers while they're rejoicin' because we've come, an' when Uncle Billy gets ready to leave, the Johnnies will take care to keep out of his way."

There is no good reason why I should dwell overly long on what was for me a mournful march, although every member of Company G did his best to act a friendly part. None of our people appeared to oppose the advance, and the army went slowly forward, gathering vast quantities of provisions and grain from the plantations on the road.

I must confess that the foraging was carried on in a more systematic manner than I had ever seen a like work performed by our own people. A certain number of men were told off to march or ride ahead of the column and gather everything that could be of service to the army, and of a verity nothing escaped them. The plunder was brought out to the roadside, and when the wagon-train came up the stuff was loaded on to the vehicles while they were moving, thus preventing any loss of time or causing confusion in the ranks.

As a matter of fact, General Sherman was not only marching through Georgia, but he was making a clean sweep of everything in his course which might be of benefit to our soldiers.

It was not yet noon when we rode into Milledgeville, and never so much as a pistol had been fired in defense of the city.

As I learned later, only a comparatively small portion of the Yankee army occupied the capital, the greater number of the soldiers being encamped out-

side, but the 46th Maine was among those who entered, and therefore it was I witnessed all the work of destruction without being able to raise a finger to prevent it.

General Sherman made his headquarters in the governor's house, the chief official of the State, I am ashamed to say, having fled when it was known positively that the Yankees would occupy the city, and before nightfall no less than two thousand men had been detailed to burn the magazines, arsenals, railroad buildings, a certain number of factories, storehouses and cotton.

Dick's regiment, or a portion of it, took part in this cruel work, and rather than be separated from my friend, I accompanied him; but there is little need to set down the fact that I had no hand in the destruction.

Night had come before the task was more than fairly well begun, and because Company G spent an unusually long time in firing a warehouse filled with goods which were not particularly combustible, we two lads and Uncle Rube's detachment fell behind the detail from the 46th, finding ourselves amid the men of a Massachusetts regiment who had come into the city by a different route from that by which we had entered.

None of our party had ever met this body of soldiers, but we marched with them to continue the dreadful work until suddenly one of the privates left his place in the line to range himself by my side as he said sharply and as if accusing me of some crime:

"You're a Johnnie! What are you doin' here?"

"I'm a prisoner," was my reply, and it never came into my thick head that such a statement would be doubted.

"You're a liar!" he cried excitedly, clutching me by the coat collar as he shouted loudly to his comrades, "Come here, boys! I've got a rebel spy!"

It angered me to be called a "rebel," more particularly when the term "Confederate" would have answered the fellow's purpose equally well, and without giving heed to what might follow such an act, I struck the man a blow on the jaw that sent him headlong into the gutter.

He screamed shrilly for help as he fell, and on the instant his comrades swarmed back upon us, the bayoneted guns being held ready for use, and but for Uncle Rube I would have been spitted by a dozen weapons before it was possible to speak.

The old man literally leaped in front of me, swinging his musket after the fashion of a club in order to strike up the bayonets and at the same time crying loudly:

"This way, men of the 46th Maine! Here's a crowd of Boston snobs tryin' to pick a row!"

Every member of the "detachment" was at the old man's heels before the words were fairly out of his mouth, and in a twinkling I found myself surrounded by my friendly captors, each of whom stood ready to face any danger rather than permit me to be harmed.

Uncle Rube made such good play with his musket that those who would have thrust at me in the excitement of the moment were foiled in their purpose, and thus there was time for parley.

"Have you a spy in there?" some one on the outskirts of the throng shouted, and Dick replied, screaming at the full strength of his lungs in order to make himself heard above the uproar:

"We've got a Confederate prisoner, who was taken yesterday an' is now on parole!"

"It strikes me that it's a bit odd to lug a Johnnie 'round with you on sich work as this!" a voice cried in a tone which implied a doubt of the statement made, and again the men nearest tried to get past those who surrounded me, in order to strike a fatal blow.

"Let me at 'em!" I cried, literally wild with rage and giving no heed as to how the words might sound. "I'm not minded to be killed like a rat."

"Stay where you are, lad, an' hold your hosses!" Uncle Rube shouted. "I'll guarantee there won't be any killin' done in this gang unless some of these Boston swells crowd up too nigh."

"Don't open your mouth again," Dick said in a low tone, speaking directly in my ear, for a whisper could not have been heard while the uproar was so great. "At such a time as this men will do what in calmer moments they would blush to think about."

"How does it happen that you're luggin' that Johnnie 'round?" some one cried sharply, and Uncle Rube shouted:

"While you fellers was loafin' 'round home makin' up your minds to enlist, the 46th was nigh to Vicksburg, an' there some of us was took prisoners by this Johnnie you're kickin' up sich a row about, or some of his mates, an' he treated us white all the way through. He fell inter our hands yesterday, an' we're countin' on doin' what we can to square the account, unless you swells object, in which case we're ready for quite a mix-up. The 46th Maine has been showin' the folks for a long spell what it could do, an' we don't reckon on spilin' the record. If you raw recruits will ask real soldiers what we from Maine have done perhaps you won't be so willin' to make trouble."

The Massachusetts men were veterans, as we afterward learned, and to be called "raw recruits" aroused their temper sadly. One of the party threw a brick at the old man, and as he dodged the missile passed over his head, striking those who were on the other side of us. These last, believing for the moment that we had thus attacked them, rushed forward, and during a few seconds it looked very much as if we were about to take part in the fight of our lives.

"Close in here, lads, an' keep your wits about you!" Uncle Rube said sharply and added in a lower tone which could not have been heard save by those standing very near to him, "We'll give way slowly till we're at the door of yonder buildin', an' then make a break to get inside. There'll be an officer this way before long, an' then we'll see whether them Boston swells can play the hand they've dealt out."

It was time we stood in close order, for already were the angry men pressing against us in a manner which threatened soon to separate our force, and when it was possible to act upon the suggestion, we formed a contracted circle, each man standing on the defensive.

I fully expected the Massachusetts soldiers would use their weapons, for Uncle Rube wagged his tongue freely, uttering bitter taunts such as were well calculated to excite the most peaceable.

More than one stone was thrown, and the men threatened us with their bayonets, but we contrived to dodge the missiles and to strike aside the gleaming steel, all the while falling back step by step until we were come to the door of a warehouse which had been burst open by those who were in search of munitions of war.

"Now's our time!" the old man said sharply when

he saw that we were within a few feet of the building. "Make the rush, an' see to it that the doorway ain't blocked till all hands are inside."

It was a critical moment for us when we turned our back on the enemy, and we did not succeed in the retreat without injury. Jim Haley was knocked down by a missile and fell directly in front of the door, but the old man, with a display of strength which was surprising, lifted the helpless fellow in his arms much as if he had been a baby, and an instant later we were sheltered, so far as might be, by the shattered door.

A volley of rocks and bricks rattled against the building as we disappeared from view, and then came that cry which caused me more fear than would have been excited by any number of men in orderly array:

"A spy! a spy! We've got a grayback penned in here! Smoke him out!"

By this time so many soldiers had gathered that even had the commander himself appeared on the scene he might have had great difficulty in ascertaining the true state of affairs until after much mischief had been done, and I was beginning to believe it had been a grave mistake to take refuge in the building when Uncle Rube said in a business-like tone as he set about bracing the door with timbers on the inside:

"Let 'em howl! I reckon we'll be able to hold our own in here till some one comes along who can get us out of the scrape, an' you may bet great big dollars that the sun won't be very high to-morrow mornin' before I've made complaint against them pirates. We'll see if the 46th is to be treated in this way by a lot of city duffers."

We succeeded in barricading the door in such a manner that it would resist any ordinary attack, and

by that time Steve Stubbs had led the way upstairs, where we could hear him shouting:

"Come here, boys; it's a great show!"

There was no reason why we should remain in the dark hallway, and Steve's invitation was accepted without delay, our party clambering up the stairs until the third story was gained, when we could see that the little man had told no more than the truth when he declared it to be a "great show."

On every hand could be seen burning buildings to which the torch had been applied by orders of the commander-in-chief, and the flames dispelled the darkness of night until one could see as distinctly as at noonday. It was a scene of war's havoc, and while I knew full well that our people would have done the same under similar circumstances, my heart was filled with bitter rage because of the destruction of goods and material so sadly needed by the struggling Confederates.

After having gained a fairly good idea of what was going on around us and were, so to speak, accustomed to the terrible spectacle, I began to realize that the door of the building in which we had taken refuge was still besieged by the Massachusetts men, and they had not ceased insisting that a "rebel spy" was cornered, ready for the taking.

"It won't do us any harm if they keep on yellin'," Uncle Rube said carelessly when I called his attention to the situation. "In case the sneaks try to batter down the door, we'll take a hand in the scrimmage, an' then I'll go bail some of 'em gets hurt."

Once more the old man gave his undivided attention to the scene of destruction everywhere around, but I kept my eyes fastened on that throng of angry

men who would have given me short shrift just then had I fallen into their clutches.

It appeared to me that the outcries were dying away, as if the men, weary with shouting, were discussing the question of forcing an entrance to the building, but of this I could not be certain because of the tumult everywhere around. A few moments later, however, I decided that they had given up the chase, for a considerable number suddenly disappeared while the remainder drew off across the street until a projection of the warehouse hid them from my view.

That this danger had passed I felt convinced and gave no further heed to what might be going on in the street, but joined my companions in watching the work of destruction.

The scene was fascinating because of being so terrible, and for a time I neither thought of nor saw anything save the horrors of war as portrayed by the helplessness of Milledgeville in the grasp of the enemy.

Perhaps half an hour passed in silence, so far as we in the upper story of the warehouse were concerned, and then Uncle Rube suddenly started up, going to the head of the stairs, where he stood motionless a few seconds.

"What is the matter?" Dick cried, without moving from his station near the window.

The old man made no reply, and after a brief pause he descended the stairs.

"He allers was a restless man," Steve Stubbs said in a petulant tone. "Here we are as snug as a lot of bugs, an' he must needs go cavortin' 'round to find trouble."

At that instant the odor of smoke came to my

nostrils, and in view of the conflagration on every hand this fact would have caused me no uneasiness, save for the fact that it seemed as if the noisome vapor had come from the stairway instead of through the windows.

Then a terrible fear came upon me, and without giving words to the thoughts which literally caused my brain to whirl, I followed Uncle Rube at full speed.

Down two flights of stairs I tumbled rather than ran, and at the head of the passage leading to the street I came upon the old man, who was tearing frantically at the barricade which had been built under his directions.

There was no longer any need for me to ask why he was thus working. The smoke was coming through the shattered door in puffs; already did I experience a difficulty in breathing; tiny tongues of flame could be seen here and there, telling that the woodwork of the door was well afire.

"They have begun to smoke us out," I said, so dazed for the instant that I failed to realize fully all the danger which threatened.

"Aye, that's what they have done, the miserable hounds, an' unless we get in some fine work mighty quick we'll be in a hole outer which it'll be hard to crawl. Knock in one of the windows on that floor, an' yell for help, though I don't reckon anybody'll give much heed to a fire on this night."

CHAPTER III

THE ESCAPE

EVEN at this late day it seems incredible that soldiers would deliberately fire a building in which

their companions-at-arms had taken refuge, no matter how excited or enraged they may have been, and I have more than once heard it urged that other men, those who had no knowledge that any one was hiding in the building, had, in compliance with orders from headquarters, applied the torch.

I shall always believe, however, that the men simply proposed to smoke us out, and, within a few moments after the blaze had been started, were ordered to some other part of the city.

If this last supposition be correct, one can readily understand that the men would not have made known the fact of their having fired a building without specific orders to that effect, but trusted to the chance of our being able to escape uninjured.

Just then I did not spend valuable time indulging in such speculations, but obeyed the old man's orders as promptly as possible, after giving the alarm to our comrades on the floor above.

To shatter the glass of the window was but the work of an instant. A short length of joist lay near at hand, and with this as a weapon, I stove out the entire sash, bending forward eagerly in the hope of seeing some one near at hand to whom I could appeal for help.

The street was deserted, as can well be fancied when I say that the lower portion of the front of the building appeared to be on fire along the entire length, and already was the heat so great that it would have been painful to pass by on the other side of the way.

I sprang back quickly, half suffocated by the clouds of smoke which were rising, and my face reddened by the flames, just as Uncle Rube, realizing that it would be folly for him to spend his time at the door

when the fire had such headway that we could not pass out even though the barrier was removed, came up the stairs.

"See anybody, lad?" he cried.

"Not a person. The building is well on fire in front, an' no one would be such a fool as to come any nearer than may be absolutely necessary."

While speaking I had run across the passageway to those windows which opened from the rear, the old man following close at my heels, and when the length of joist had been used with proper effect it was possible for us to see that our plight was by no means as serious as had at first appeared.

From the sill to the ground was hardly more than twelve feet, and here were no signs of fire.

"I reckon things ain't so bad as I allowed at first," Uncle Rube said with a long-drawn sigh of relief. "When I got a whiff of the smoke, the idea in my mind was that the reprobates had fired it in good shape an' we'd find ourselves reg'larly hemmed in——"

"Do they count on burnin' us to death?" Dick cried in alarm as he came down the stairs at full speed with every evidence of fear, and before I could make reply he was looking out of the window. "It don't seem so dangerous from here," he added with a nervous laugh.

"You're right, lad, an' yet we haven't got any too much time on our hands, for fire works quickly when once it has a fair start," the old man said grimly. "It'll be easier to slide down than to jump, if we can find a piece of timber. Call all hands together while I'm lookin' for what we need."

There was little necessity for summoning our comrades. While Uncle Rube was speaking they came

down the stairs in a bunch, and if there had been sufficient light I fancy we would have seen more than one white face among them.

"Let me out!" Steve Stubbs squeaked in an agony of fear. "Give me a fair show, boys, for after all I've suffered in this 'ere army it would be dreadful if I was burned up like a piece of bacon."

"You're too green to burn, an' allers will be, Stevey, no matter how hard we try to polish you up," Job Lord growled as he looked nervously out of the window, but Mr. Stubbs was too much frightened to take offense at the remark.

"It's a terrible fix we're in, a terrible fix!" he wailed again and again until Uncle Rube, who had succeeded in finding that for which he sought, cried impatiently:

"Hold your tongue or we'll drop you out first, an' every blessed one of us'll slide down on top."

Whether this threat or the realization that escape from the burning building would not be difficult silenced Mr. Stubbs, I cannot say, but certain it is he ceased his outcries, and five minutes later we were all on the ground questioning as to what the next move should be.

The orders had been for a portion of the 46th to take part in destroying certain buildings, but owing to the interference of the Massachusetts men it seemed as if the work had been performed without our aid, and even Uncle Rube was at a loss to decide exactly what we should do.

After wandering around half an hour or more without definite aim, forced here to make wide detours to avoid the flames or turned back there where the streets were entirely blocked by burning buildings, we came upon that portion of the force in whose

company we entered the city, and, without making any explanations, fell into line.

The work of destruction had been well begun and all that remained to be done was to confine the fire within the limits set, but in this labor the men from Maine had no part, therefore my friends simply remained under arms until the order was given for them to return to the encampment of the 46th.

By the time we arrived there the new day was beginning to dawn, and it did not seem worth while to lie down for the purpose of sleeping.

"You lads get breakfast an' I'll toddle over for a talk with the colonel," Uncle Rube said as he removed his accouterments, piling them under a friend's shelter tent with but little regard as to whether he awakened the owner.

"Are you goin' to serve them Boston toughs out in proper shape?" Mr. Stubbs asked, but the old man made no reply. He had not forgiven the little man for his display of cowardice while we were in the burning building.

After Uncle Rube had gone, and while we were obeying his orders, some of the camp gossips came up with the information that General Wheeler, with a large force of Confederate cavalry, had been met by Federal scouts on the direct road to Sandersville.

There are always in an army a certain number of privates who claim to know exactly what the commander proposes to do, and during the past four and twenty hours we had heard again and again that General Sherman counted on going direct to Sandersville after having so nearly destroyed Milledgeville that it would be of little value to our people.

My heart was literally in my mouth when the information regarding General Wheeler's force was

brought in. It showed that our army leaders were making ready to check the advance of General Sherman instead of fleeing before him as Uncle Rube and his followers seemed to believe.

My parole would expire a full two hours before sunset, and I counted on taking every possible advantage which could honestly be had. I decided to warn Dick once more of my intention and after that to hold my peace. When it was certain that forty-eight hours had elapsed since I pledged my word not to make any effort at escape the mare and I would strain every nerve, regardless of ordinary dangers, to give these soldiers of the 46th, who had been such very good friends, the slip.

It would not be a simple matter to ride away from all these men in blue while I wore my uniform of gray, and the odds were strongly against my being alive five minutes after the first attempt was made, but it then seemed to me that death was preferable to remaining quietly a prisoner at the time when my services were needed so sadly.

I was yet turning the matter over in my mind when Uncle Rube returned from his interview with the colonel, and a single glance at his face was sufficient to show that he had not received the expected satisfaction for injuries received.

"Wa'al, Reuben," Mr. Stubbs cried jauntily as the old man walked slowly toward us, "will them Boston bullies get what's comin' to 'em?"

"What er you squealin' so loud for?" Uncle Rube asked petulantly, and every member of the party, with the exception of Steve Stubbs himself, understood that it would not be well to question him too closely.

"I ain't squealin', Reuben," the little man replied

in an apologetic tone. "But of course you're bound to tell us what the colonel's goin' to do 'bout our bein' mighty nigh burnt to a cinder."

"It's a pity your tongue hadn't been scorched so's you couldn't work it quite so much," Uncle Rube said sharply, and then turning toward Job Lord, he demanded fiercely, "What's the reason this detachment can't 'tend to business when I ain't 'round to look after 'em? We're allers behindhand like the tail of a calf!"

"I reckon somethin's gone wrong with you, Reuben," Mr. Lord replied in a soothing tone. "Breakfast is ready for the eatin', an' we might er had that part of the business over but for waitin' till you come."

"Then let's fall to an' have it over with or the men of the 46th will get in the habit of sayin' that my detachment hasn't got life enough to eat till after all the rest of the regiment are ready to march."

Mr. Lord and Jim Haley made haste to set before the angry corporal his portion of the meal, and matters might have gone smoothly from that moment had Steve Stubbs been sufficiently wise to hold his peace, but he was eager to learn what kind of punishment would be inflicted upon those who had attacked us and must needs insist on knowing what had passed between the old man and the colonel.

"Why don't you tell us what you've been doin'?" he squeaked, and Uncle Rube literally glared at him as he said with an evident effort to speak calmly:

"Hold your tongue, you idjut!"

From that moment until the morning meal had been eaten no one spoke, and then, thanks to the soothing influence of his pipe, the old corporal was ready to tell his story.

"I seen the colonel of the 46th," he began, as if it was a matter of minor importance which had only at that moment come into his mind, and Steve Stubbs would have spoiled everything by breaking in had I not gripped his arm with such force that instead of speaking he gave vent to a little cry of pain.

"I allowed that was what you counted on doin', Reuben," Job Lord said quietly as if to encourage further confidences.

"Yes, I seen him, an' I don't have any hesitation in sayin' that he don't know quite as much as a yaller dog," the old man replied angrily. "Of course I told him how them Boston roosters tried to do us, an' what do you think he said? He allowed that we hadn't any business loafin' 'round the city——"

"But we was ordered in there!" Mr. Stubbs squeaked before I could check him.

"If you don't keep that bloomin' idjut quiet, I'll never tell another thing in this world! He said we hadn't oughter taken Bob Yardley with us, an' instead of provokin'—that's what he called it—provokin' a row, it was our business to report at once to the officer in command."

"I don't make out how we could er done that, seein's they had us reg'larly penned in," Job Lord said, half to himself, and the old corporal added:

"Of course we couldn't, an' that's what I told the colonel, but he was so thick-headed that it wasn't possible to beat any sense inter him. He says that the Massachusetts men are the ones that have a right to make trouble by reportin' to the commander, an' we'll be lucky if we get out of it with whole skins."

"What about their settin' the buildin' on fire?" Jim Haley asked.

"He claims that the warehouse was one of the

places marked out for burnin', as was shown by the front door bein' splintered, an' the chances are that the Boston swells didn't have anythin' to do with startin' a blaze. Anyhow, he says we wasn't sent inter the city to loaf 'round in any buildin', an' no matter if the sneaks had roughed it inter us, we oughter be brought up with a sharp turn for idlin' when there was work to be done."

"Well, I'll be sniggered!" Mr. Lord exclaimed.

"That's jest it, Job. It's enough to make any decent man find fault. Anybody'd think we didn't 'mount to a row of pins in this 'ere army to hear the colonel talk. If it wasn't for the folks at home I'd give right up tryin' to lick the Johnnies an' let somebody else run this business."

Then Uncle Rube lapsed into silence, and Dick and I moved away a short distance where we could give free vent to our mirth without being seen by the angry corporal.

Then it was, after we were at an end of our laughing, that I told the lad what I had decided upon, concluding the announcement by saying:

"I don't want you to get into trouble through me, Dick, therefore your only course is to turn your prisoner over to the guard before the forty-eight hours have elapsed."

"I can't do it, Bob; I can't do it! Why not renew the parole? There isn't one chance in a hundred that you can escape from the guards, an' you'll be no worse off so far as goin' free is concerned by stayin' with us."

"I'm goin' to make a try for that one chance, Dick. It's my duty, an' I'm certain you'd do the same in my place."

The dear lad did not urge me further. He under-

stood how I felt under all the circumstances, and while he would not have admitted as much, I know he believed I was acting as a soldier should.

At that moment Dick was summoned by one of his superior officers, and I, feeling perfectly safe in the encampment because of my friends, strolled leisurely away toward the horses, soon finding myself comparatively alone save for a few soldiers who were acting as grooms.

I was thinking over the possibility of making my escape, giving no heed to anything around me, when suddenly I heard in a low, sharp tone:

"Hands up, Johnnie, and if you so much as yip I'll bore you through with a bullet!"

Obeying the command quickly, for in those days it was dangerous to hesitate under such circumstances, I wheeled to find myself confronting three men whom I recognized as members of that Massachusetts regiment with whom we had come in contact during the conflagration.

"What do you want of me?" I asked sharply. "I am under parole, as you know full well."

"Perhaps you are, but we're goin' to find that out for ourselves before you swell around here very much longer," one of them said angrily. "Forward, march! An' step out lively or there'll be more trouble here than you ever dreamed about!"

I could do no less than obey, backed up as the command was by loaded weapons, but I realized only too well that if I was separated from my friends at the moment when the parole was come to an end there would be no possibility of escape.

Those who were thus spiriting me away understood that if any member of Dick's company should come to understand what was being done, they would stand

a good show of being brought up with a sharp turn by such of the commander's staff as had accepted my parole, and quickened their pace and mine until we were almost running, when suddenly I saw Mr. Stubbs in the distance.

There was little probability I would be allowed to hail him. Therefore, when we were within perhaps thirty paces of him, I pretended to strike my toe against some obstacle, and, falling headlong, began to scream shrilly as if in severe pain.

It goes without saying that the attention of Mr. Stubbs was arrested, and coming up swiftly, he demanded of my captors:

"What are you doin' with our prisoner, you Boston dudes? Come out of there, Lieutenant Yardley, an' we'll see whether those who counted last night on murderin' us run this 'ere army or if Uncle Billy has a little bit to say about things!"

Those who were trying to spirit me away tried to pull me to my feet before making reply to the little soldier from Maine, but I hugged my foot as if suffering greatest pain, taking good care to shriek now and then in agony, and each instant the throng which had begun to gather increased in numbers.

"It can't be done after all this row," I heard one of the men say to his comrades, and an instant later all three ran swiftly away, intent only on escaping the notice of any officer who might call them to an accounting.

"What's been goin' on?" Mr. Stubbs asked in bewilderment as he made his way to my side, and, knowing that I was safe from any further attempt on the part of the Massachusetts men, I replied:

"It is all right now, and I beg you to show me the

way to the encampment of the 46th as soon as possible."

Not until after several minutes had elapsed did the little man understand what would have been done, and it seemed to afford him the greatest pleasure because, as he expressed it, "he had, single-handed, got the best of that Boston crowd."

After that Dick and I remained as nearly alone as two can be in a military camp until the moment came when I believed the forty-eight hours had expired.

"Now, my boy, do your duty," I said, striving earnestly to speak in a cheery tone. "I'll wait here till you come back, an' then it'll be a case of the guards takin' all the responsibility."

The dear lad did not trust himself to speak, but set off without delay, and I went over to where the mare was tethered by the side of Dick's gray. There was but little hope in my mind that I would be able to take her with me in the flight, if it so chanced that the opportunity for escape presented itself, and yet was I minded to prepare for any possibility.

I saddled the horse, strapped the borrowed blankets in place and examined the revolvers in the holsters. Then, leading her back to the place where I had parted with Dick, I awaited the coming of the guard, for it was reasonable to suppose a squad would be sent to take charge of me.

Not more than ten minutes elapsed before Dick returned, and, much to my surprise, alone.

"Well?" I asked impatiently, believing his heart had failed him at the last moment and he had come back to tell me as much. "Where is the squad?"

"You are to report yourself as a prisoner who

needs careful guardin'," he replied with an odd smile and I cried in surprise:

"Do you mean that I am to give myself up?"

"It looks that way, doesn't it?"

"But, Dick, my parole has expired, an' I'm not in honor bound to run around this encampment huntin' for somebody to put me in irons!"

"That's what I told the major, an' he simply repeated the orders."

"Are you responsible for my obeyin'?"

"Not a bit of it. I have washed my hands of the whole matter, only agreein' that you'd wait here till I got back," and again the lad smiled in an odd fashion.

"But I don't count on obeyin' any Yankee command if I have a choice in the matter, an' give you fair warnin' that I'll ride through your lines if I can."

"I reckon that's what the major feared," Dick said with a laugh, and then I believed an opportunity for escape had purposely been left open for me.

Major Hartley had once persuaded me to do that which put me in a very bad light with my own people, and I began to believe he was trying thus to atone for it.

I leaped into the saddle, every nerve quivering with excitement, and leaned over to take Dick's hand as I said:

"You may tell the major that I left you in search of the prisoners' guard, an' if it's the fortune of war that we two do not meet again in this world, you know full well I will never cease to think of you as my dearest friend."

"Even now I'd urge you to stay here if there was any chance of your listenin' to me. The odds are

against your gettin' away alive, for our people will shoot to kill when they see your uniform."

"I've figured all that in, Dick, durin' the few seconds since you told me of what seems to be a piece of rare good luck, an' am ready for the venture."

Then I released his hand and rode slowly through the encampment, not daring to turn my head lest the tears which were so very near my eyelids should find vent, for my heart was heavy and light at the same moment—heavy at the thought that I might never see the dear lad again and light because of the opportunity which had been given me.

It was only natural that the men whom I passed turned and looked at me with keenest curiosity, for surely it was the oddest thing imaginable that a Confederate officer, mounted and armed, should pass unmolested amid a vast army of Federals.

Each instant I expected to hear the command given for me to halt and was mentally nerving myself for the race which would begin the instant any one tried to stop me, and then I heard that which caused me to believe I might succeed in my purpose, at least until coming up with the sentinels on the outer line of the camp.

"It's a disguise one of our scouts is wearin'," a soldier said to his comrade as the two looked at me curiously. "Uncle Billy is sendin' out a spy, most likely to see how many Johnnies are like to be found nearabout Sandersville."

I fancy that all who saw me were of the same belief, for never an attempt was made to gain further information, and I rode at leisurely pace the entire length of the encampment until having arrived at the Sandersville road where a wagon-train was just pulling out for the march.

There were so many men, soldiers, teamsters and camp followers, standing around that even if I had been eager to find the officer of the day I might have had considerable difficulty, and striving to appear annoyed because of the train which blocked the way, I turned the mare into the field as if to ride around the wagons.

Even then no one seemed to pay any attention to me, and I gave the impatient horse her head a bit, steadily increasing the pace until I was riding swiftly.

Not until I had entirely passed the train and was in the road once more did any one attempt to check me, and then a squad of men who were halted on the line of march called out for me to stop.

"Haven't got time now, lads!" I cried cheerily, urging the little mare on faster. "I'll tell you all about it at Sandersville."

"Who is it? What is he doin' in that uniform?" I heard one of the party ask excitedly, and then it was no surprise to me when the command "halt" was given.

I had had ample time in which to decide upon my course of action in such an event, and rode at full speed until seeing one of the men raise a musket to his shoulder, when I pulled the mare around at right angles with the direction I had been pursuing, striking across a cotton field.

Almost at the same instant the report of the weapon rang out sharp and menacing, but the bullet whistled past my head harmlessly. If I had not changed the course exactly when I did my escape would have been accomplished at that moment, but I should have gone out of the world very suddenly,

instead of in the direction of General Wheeler's forces.

It can well be fancied that I sent the little mare along at the top of her speed, for now had come the decisive moment, and while bending over the pommel of the saddle it was possible to hear the hum of the missiles that passed unpleasantly near at hand.

Before the soldiers could reload their pieces I was beyond range, thanks to the advantage I had in the way of a start, and then, without slackening the pace, I looked the mare over to make certain she had not been wounded.

As nearly as could be seen we had come out of the affair without a scratch, and I had good reason for believing I had succeeded in what, a few hours previous, had seemed to be impossible.

This, however, was not the time for me to boast. I was by no means out of the woods, and, take any direction I might, there was good reason for believing that the blue-coated enemy might bar the way.

From what I had heard concerning General Wheeler's force being in the vicinity of Sandersville, it seemed as if my best course would be to gain the region around that town at the earliest moment, for no one could say how soon our people might be forced to beat a rapid retreat.

It was no longer possible to see any Federal soldiers. I was a good three miles south of the main road, and although I knew full well that the foragers often ventured even further than that from the army, it did not seem probable they could extend very far either side of the moving column, particularly in that section of the country where plunder was not plentiful, save along the regular lines of travel.

Therefore it was that I turned the mare slightly,

counting on making a half circle until heading, as nearly as I could judge, in the direction of Sandersville and to ride swiftly.

As a matter of course I could not push forward as rapidly among the trees or over tilled land as on a beaten path; but the little mare would do the best she could, that I knew full well, and if we failed in the escape it would be our misfortune, not our fault.

Within half an hour we had arrived at the bank of that creek which flows through Milledgeville, and, as a matter of course, there was nothing for it but to swim across, with revolvers and cartridges held high in the air that no harm might come to my only means of defense.

We got safely over and with but little expenditure of time, after which there was nothing to be done save ride ahead, taking the chances of coming upon a squad of the enemy. I had heard while with Dick that the Yankee cavalry were up Warrenton way, therefore I need have no fear of them, but so many of the infantry officers in the Yankee army were mounted that in the event of coming suddenly and unexpectedly upon any considerable force, it was reasonable to suppose there would be enough men in the saddle to give me a very disagreeable race.

During two hours or more I continued the flight without seeing or hearing anything to cause alarm, and then, when I had begun to congratulate myself that I must be in advance of the foremost troops, the mare swerved quickly aside just in time to avoid three men in blue who were seated under the shade of a tree.

The chickens, ducks and pigs which they had with them was sufficient proof that I was not yet clear of

the industrious foragers, and, as might have been expected, they summoned me to halt.

As a matter of course I urged my tired steed to a fresh outburst of speed, looking over my shoulder meanwhile to learn when a bullet might be expected, and to my alarm I saw the fellows run toward where three horses were tethered.

It was to be a race for liberty and came at a time when I was least prepared, for the mare was nearly blown. In my folly I had neglected to give her a breathing spell when she showed signs of suffering, and now I might be forced to pay the penalty.

"Do the best you can, my pet, an' if the worst comes I'll give the Yankees a chance to show how they can fight, for I don't intend to be taken back a prisoner."

Allowing the brave horse to pick her own road, I made certain the revolvers were properly charged and loose in the holsters, after which I turned again to look at my pursuers. One was already in the saddle and the second just mounting. The third stood near the plunder, as if counting on remaining behind to care for it.

"It's only two to one, an' he who can shoot best from the saddle will have the advantage!" I cried aloud, believing those in the rear were mounted infantrymen, not cavalry trained, in which case my situation was not quite so desperate as it might otherwise have been.

CHAPTER IV

WITH WHEELER

THERE was no hope in my mind that I might escape through the fleetness of the mare's heels. The

little steed had nearly run her race, owing to my carelessness in pushing her when no danger threatened, and before another mile had been traversed it would be necessary to pull her up, unless I was willing the honest, faithful animal should drop under me.

I knew by the manner in which my pursuers started out that their horses were good for a ten-mile race at the very least. Therefore I searched eagerly with my eyes for some place where I might make a stand with reasonable chance of holding my own.

We were in the pine woods where a wagon-train could have passed among the trees without hindrance, and it was cover that I wanted—scrub of any kind, so that I might not be forced to give the enemy a target too large and plain to be missed even by an ordinary marksman.

The mare was laboring painfully, and I had decided to dismount near a large tree twenty yards further on, where I might shelter myself Indian fashion, when I saw at the right of the course I was pursuing a mass of matted foliage, giving token of swampy land.

I turned the panting horse sharply around, spurred her to one more effort and then leaped from the saddle where the water stood knee-deep, with all the cover that a sorely beset fugitive could reasonably desire.

The Yankees were not in sight when I gained this temporary hiding place, nor did they appear until a full five minutes had elapsed, and then, to my great relief and delight, both rode straight on without giving heed to the swamp so near at hand.

It was a piece of good fortune on which I had not counted, for who could have believed that man-

hunters would have passed such a convenient refuge without at least having a look at it?

The mare was drinking her fill, and I did the same, after which came the question as to whether it might be possible in the darkness to find a bit of solid ground within this swamp where the horse and I could remain hidden until the Yankee foragers were tired with searching for us.

It was not the most simple task I ever undertook, this exploring the treacherous place where a single misstep might plunge the mare and me into mire from which we could not extricate ourselves unaided, and where, amid the foliage, one must trust almost wholly to the sense of feeling.

Fortunately my horse had been trained to stand wherever I left her, and during ten minutes or more I searched for some path by which I could safely lead the mare further into the tangle, and at last a practicable route was found, although it might have been impossible to coax a restive steed over such poor footing.

So far as I could tell, the Yankees were yet riding straight ahead when I gained a resting place fifty yards directly into the swamp, and my weary horse stood cropping the scanty grass from a knoll forty feet or more in diameter.

Here I believed myself safe from discovery, and no sooner were my fears quieted in one direction than I found ample cause for fresh alarm.

While I remained in hiding General Sherman's army was pressing forward toward Sandersville, and I knew by late experience that I had not made a sufficiently long detour to the southward in order to avoid the foragers.

It seemed absolutely necessary I should set off

again, as soon as the mare had had time to rest, and also that we must ride around the swamp, striking a new course at least five miles from the main road.

How long we stayed there I cannot say with any degree of accuracy. I unsaddled the horse, after which I rubbed her legs vigorously, and when it seemed to me that two hours had been spent in the halt I made ready for flight once more.

When we came among the pines again nothing could be seen or heard of the enemy, but I advanced slowly and cautiously after mounting, lest we make the same blunder as before.

I skirted the edge of the swamp, bearing as sharply toward the south as the nature of the country would permit. The night was well advanced, and I who had hoped to be with friends before sunrise, was apparently no nearer the goal than when I left the Federal camp.

There was no longer any great danger of coming suddenly upon the enemy because I was by this time far from his probable line of march, and while the darkness favored me in this respect, I was forced to ride almost at a snail's pace because of not being able to see the course.

I am not minded to describe in detail that long journey in the darkness when I had but little idea of the direction in which we were proceeding.

We could only blunder on, the mare and I, for neither of us was familiar with the country, and trust to the chance of coming upon those we sought, while the possibilities were decidedly in favor of our being gobbled up again by the Yankees.

It was a blind ride, and before morning came I had made up my mind that we were many miles off the true course. Therefore my surprise was even

greater than my delight at seeing, when it was sufficiently light, a body of mounted men bivouacking among the pines, and because of the absence of camp equipment, I knew they were our people.

Half an hour later I was standing before General Wheeler, giving him a brief account of the misfortunes which had befallen me and begging for an opportunity to strike a blow in defense of the Cause.

Right willingly did he give the desired permission for me to join his force, not as an officer but as a volunteer who was more eager to do what he might toward checking the enemy's advance than to hold out for the rights which his commission gave him.

The general had no more than three thousand effective mounted men and had bivouacked within a mile and a half of Sandersville, where he proposed to make a stand with no other hope than that General Sherman's advance might be checked until our infantry, fifteen or twenty miles away, could be brought up.

Knowing what I did of the enemy's strength, it seemed as if this was indeed a forlorn hope, for General Wheeler's force was but a handful compared with the number of Yankees who could be hurled upon him within half an hour's time.

Under no consideration would I have said that which might have prevented an attack, even had it been in my power. I burned with the desire to inflict some injury upon the enemy who had marched thus far through the State without serious hindrance, even though much blood should be spilled hopelessly.

Strange as it may seem, there was not in my mind the idea that very shortly I would be opposed to Dick, Uncle Rube and those members of the "detachment" whom I called my friends, but from my point of view

it was to be an engagement with the Federal forces and not any particular members of it.

Scouts had been sent out before I arrived to ascertain when we might expect the invaders, and at the same time messengers rode to Irwins and Johnson, where it was hoped some of our force might be found.

Then came that time of waiting, so trying to the nerves, when one knows that within a short while he will be battling to kill and in danger of being killed. An actual conflict is as nothing compared with that suspense when one has opportunity in which to consider all the chances and mentally shrinks from the storm of shot and shell which is soon to be faced.

Not until ten o'clock in the forenoon did the first of the scouts return, and from their reports we believed the advance guard of the enemy would be upon us in about two hours.

There was nothing for it but to wait with so much of patience as we could summon until the command to ride forward should be given. The force had been held where it bivouacked with the idea that when the foremost of the Yankees rode into the town they would not deem it necessary to scour the country roundabout in order to learn if there were any Confederates near at hand. Our plan was, as I heard from those who claimed to be well informed, that when the foremost division had come up, while they were engaged in making an encampment, as it seemed probable they would do, we were to push them so suddenly that they might be thrown into momentary confusion, and we thus gain an advantage from which they would not recover until a serious blow had been struck by us.

Some of our scouts were able to keep in close touch with the Federals, and when word was brought that

the advance, consisting of a regiment or more, had arrived, orders were given to mount and stand ready.

The blood leaped wildly in my veins as I prepared for that dash which is ever so inspiriting that all sense of danger is forgotten. The mad ride, the thunder of the horses' hoofs, the shrill cries of command and then the falling upon the enemy, whether prepared or no, when hand-to-hand conflicts are waged until one or the other of the combatants lies on the field wounded or dead.

It all went as General Wheeler had planned, save that instead of finding one or two thousand of the enemy in occupation of the town there were no less than two full brigades, as could be seen when we came in view.

It seemed to me then, and does now as I look back upon it, that never was a charge of volunteer soldiers executed in better shape than ours. We held closely to the formation and came down upon the Yankee troops with a sweep which I reckoned would be irresistible. The reins were hanging loosely on the little mare's neck and she had enough of sense to hold her stride with the horses on either side, while I, revolver in hand, leaned forward in the saddle as if I would hasten the moment when the actual conflict should begin.

The Yankees must have had knowledge of our coming while we were yet a mile away, for instead of finding them all unprepared, as we hoped, they were formed in line of battle ready to receive us, and before I believed we had come within pistol shot the bullets were whistling around our heads like hornets lately driven from their nests.

Not more than two-thirds of our force succeeded in coming to close quarters with the enemy, but for-

tunately for me I was among the number, and then came that fever, born of the fumes of burning powder, when one realizes nothing, sees nothing save as a picture that is blurred, but is conscious only of the animal desire to kill.

They told me afterward that the struggle was so short as not worthy to be called a fight, and I have since seen these few lines written by General Sherman himself, which makes it appear that our charge was no more than a wrangle of children, for he disposes of it thus briefly while describing it:

"A brigade of rebel cavalry was deployed before the town and was driven in and through it by our skirmish line. I myself saw the rebel cavalry apply fire to stacks of fodder standing in the fields at Sandersville, and gave orders to burn some unoccupied buildings close by."

It seemed to me as if we made a violent effort against overwhelming odds, but perhaps such impression is mine simply because of the danger which confronted me personally and the fact that during a certain time my life was within a hair's breadth of being snuffed out.

As has been said, I was well up in the forefront of the battle during the time, be it a few moments or an hour, when we fought hand to hand with the blue-coated men, our brave fellows being cut down like wheat beneath the sickle, and when the first fever of battle had subsided sufficiently for me to know what was going on in my immediate vicinity the mare, stumbling over the dead body of the man who had been riding directly in front of me, threw me from the saddle.

Before I could make the first move toward rising

a Yankee came toward me at full speed, intending to run his bayonet through my body.

I put forth every effort to regain my feet, yet knowing full well that it would not be possible before the enemy had time to drive the cold steel home, and then, even while facing a sudden death, realizing keenly how near it was, I heard a cry somewhere from that mass of blue:

"Hold up there, lad! Let that Johnnie alone!"

I heard the words distinctly, and yet dimly wondered to whom they referred, when I saw my adversary overtaken by one from the rear, who cried to me sharply as he pulled his man backward to the ground:

"Look after yourself, Bob Yardley! We are not wantin' to take you prisoner the second time, neither do we count on lettin' any man of the 46th spill your blood. Get to the rear, an' that right lively, for you are outnumbered here ten to one!"

It was Uncle Rube whom I saw, and the old man had saved my life in the heat of battle when not another soldier in five thousand would have done the same, however warm a friend on the opposing side stood in danger.

"Where is Dick?" I managed to cry while scrambling to my feet, catching the mare by the bridle as she was darting away.

"Over yonder. But surely you're not thinkin' of lookin' for him! I oughter take you prisoner, lad, an' that's a fact. But there's none save the men of the 46th near by, an' they won't venture to find fault with your Uncle Rube for doin' as he has done. Get away quick, else you'll be gobbled up to a dead certainty!"

I seized the old man's hand for an instant and then

he literally shoved me into the saddle, turning the mare around and striking her flank such a blow with his musket as sent the maddened creature to the rear regardless of all my efforts to the contrary.

And that was the end of General Wheeler's attempt at Sandersville to check the triumphant advance of Sherman.

Already were our people in retreat, and small blame to them, for, as Uncle Rube had said, we were indeed outnumbered ten to one, and it would have been but a wanton destruction of life to make a longer stand under such circumstances.

It was our misfortune that the Yankees marched in such close order and again our misfortune that we had so few men with which to oppose them.

It is not for me to say that this or that might have been done had our leaders understood better the full situation or if there had been no dissension among those highest in command. I simply know that between three and four hundred brave fellows lay lifeless on the plain in front of Sandersville when we rode away, and of a verity it seems as if the sacrifice need not have been so utterly in vain if we were properly supported by troops which should have been near there at the time.

However, it is not for me to enter into the question of military faults or failures. Therefore will I go on with this poor story, forgetting, as far as may be, those whom we left behind when we made what must of a certainty be called a brave effort to check the invaders.

Saddened and dispirited we rode away at a sharp pace until putting such a distance between ourselves and the enemy that there was no fear of pursuit and then went into camp, if indeed such it could be called.

Bitterly did I contrast our condition with that of the Federals who were working so much of destruction to the State and so much injury to the Cause.

They, well equipped with every soldierly convenience and even luxury, while we, shelterless, with a scarcity of provisions and forage, were acting the part of skulkers, driven before the victorious forces in blue.

We cared for ourselves and our horses as best we might, giving to the latter such grass as they could find near at hand and ourselves going supperless to bed upon the bare ground.

This apology for a camp was in a thicket of scrub oaks, and while I was striving to find a place which would afford at least an imitation of a shelter, I came across a soldier whom I had met in Vicksburg, when he was in the infantry service—one Sam Waters, formerly of the 143d Mississippi.

I would not have known the fellow, so much older had he grown since those trying times when we lived next door to starvation, had he not hailed me cheerily, saying as he pointed to my shoulder straps:

"It looks as if you'd been spreadin' yourself, Bob Yardley, since that time when you lived in a hole in the bank, dodgin' Yankee shells for exercise an' chewin' bullets to keep your jaws from growin' rusty."

Then it was that I recognized him and replied in as jovial a tone as one could assume under the circumstances:

"I may not have been spreadin' myself, Sam, for sometimes commissions come by favor, an' it ain't always the bravest fellow who wears straps on his shoulders."

"True for you, Bob Yardley. I've noticed that

same thing myself, but when the commissions were bein' sent out from Richmond I've seemed to dodge 'em in one way or another, for here I am with well on to three years of service at my credit an' still a private."

"What sent you into the cavalry, Sam? You were in the infantry at Vicksburg."

"Yes, I stayed there footin' it all over the country with never a show for gettin' ahead an' so struck out for a berth where I wouldn't have to use my legs quite so much, but bless you, the promotion don't come any faster. I'd turn sailor if we had any navy to speak of that could be got into, but a fellow here in Georgia seems kinder shut out from the coast. Pretty hot fight we had back there, eh?"

"That's the way it seemed to me," I replied moodily. "It was fortunate for us that it didn't last longer, an' I'm beginnin' to ask myself whether our people will be able to stop General Sherman from overrunnin' the entire State."

"It don't look like it, Bob, an' that's a fact," Sam Waters said gravely and in a confidential tone. "Do you know I've come to believe that we Confederates are gettin' mighty nigh the end of our rope. Of course we hear that this corps or that division is wipin' the earth up with the Yankees, an' get all kinds of encouragin' news, but when you come to sift it right down to hard pan, we don't seem to have done 'em very much harm after all. Here's this man Sherman. We was goin' to pen him up in Atlanta an' keep him there till we got ready to accept his surrender, an' jest see how he's broke loose. I'm told that his men are livin' on the fat of the land."

"And so they are, Sam, as I can testify, havin' been a prisoner with them for eight an' forty hours."

"You a prisoner?" he asked in surprise, whereupon I told him in as few words as possible my adventures since the foragers came upon me at General Cobb's plantation.

"Well, I declare, it does beat all how that 46th Maine manages to get around everywhere! Why, I saw them same fellows that you chummed with twice, an' considerin' the fact of their bein' Yankees, I call 'em a pretty decent kind of a crowd. So they caught you, eh? An' then the old man up an' drove you right out of the fight, so's you shouldn't get hurt? They seem to think that Maine is a pretty considerable sort of a place, but somehow I never heard much about it before this 'ere war begun."

"I can't give you much information, Sam, but I do know that there's a party of men hailin' from a town called Malden who are the salt of the earth."

"I don't blame you for thinkin' so after all that's been done an' said, an' they're good fighters too, I reckon, leastways some of the rest of the army are, 'cordin' to appearances. Say, do you know what our people count on doin' now?"

As a matter of course I had no idea, and we two sat there discussing the possibilities until a late hour, when we stretched ourselves out on the ground for so much of rest as it might be possible to obtain, not knowing whether General Wheeler counted on pursuing the enemy or if we might be sent to some other portion of the Confederacy.

Next morning we were astir very early, as can well be fancied, for one does not linger long when his bed is the bare earth and there are no blankets with which to cover him.

While the men were making ready their scanty breakfasts I talked with some of the officers on Gen-

eral Wheeler's staff and learned that his orders were to annoy the Yankees to the best of our ability until our people could be brought up in sufficient force to permit of their doing real execution, and since it was impossible then to ascertain the whereabouts of my own regiment, I decided to remain with the cavalry for the time being.

Before the bugles sounded "boots and saddles" I learned that it was the general's intention to ride direct to Millen, where we might be within striking distance, for, as seemed probable, the Yankees counted on the destruction of Louisville. There it was hoped that the Federal commander would give us sufficient time in which to bring up one of our armies, and I prayed most earnestly that we might be able to try conclusions with the enemy on somewhere near an equal footing.

CHAPTER V

CLOSE QUARTERS

We were not left long in idleness or doubt as to what General Wheeler proposed to do, and it soon became apparent to every one that we would have all the fighting the most greedy could desire before our commander was ready to cry quits.

And now, before I continue my story with the march from that bivouac where we tried in vain to persuade ourselves that Southern blood had not been spilled in vain at Sandersville, let me set down General Sherman's words as to the disposition of all the forces at this time when the fate of the Confederacy was trembling in the balance:

"General Howard was south of the Ogeechee River, with the Fifteenth Corps, opposite Scarboro. General Slocum was at Buckhead Church, four miles north of Millen, with the Twentieth Corps. The Fourteenth (General Davis) was at Lumpkin's Station, on the Augusta road, about ten miles north of Millen, and the cavalry division was in good position and good condition.

"We had largely subsisted on the country; our wagons were full of forage and provisions, but as we approached the sea coast the country became more sandy and barren and food became more scarce. . . . General Bragg was in Augusta and General Wade Hampton had been ordered from Richmond to organize a large cavalry force with which to resist our progress.

"General Hardee was ahead, between us and Savannah, with McLaw's division and other irregular troops that could not, I felt assured, exceed ten thousand men."

It is to be supposed that General Wheeler knew quite as much about the disposition of our forces as did the Federal commander, and very shortly after we broke camp it became apparent that the defeat at Sandersville had not been sufficient to prevent him from trying conclusions with the enemy again, even though he was so sadly outnumbered.

We were on the march before the sun was half an hour high, and from the direction taken there could be no mistake but that we would meet the blue-coats at Millen unless their course was suddenly changed.

Since I was a volunteer, unattached to any company, it was possible to ride wherever I pleased in the column, and because Sam Waters was the only person I knew in the brigade, we rode side by side.

We had been in motion no more than ten minutes when Sam said as if the idea had suddenly occurred to him:

"I'll go bail those Yankees you ran away from had a good breakfast this mornin'."

"Aye, that they did!" I cried emphatically.

"While all we can do is to buckle our belts the tighter. Why don't our troops do a bit of foragin'?"

"Because it's against orders to take what we can't pay for, and if a good secessionist refuses to accept the Confederate government's promises to pay, we're forced to go hungry."

"Look here, Bob Yardley," and Sam sank his voice to a whisper. "You don't seem to have struck any chum in this division, else you wouldn't be cottonin' to me. Now suppose you an' I stick together an' see what the two of us can do in the way of foragin' for ourselves? I'll wager that we'll have somethin' to eat at least half the time."

"But it's clean against orders," I cried.

"An' it's clean against common sense to starve when we might confiscate somethin' once in a while," he said, laying his hand on the bridle of my horse in such a way as to guide him out of the ranks, when he brought him to a standstill.

It must be confessed that I was easily led astray, for there was in my heart a bitterness which I could not restrain because we who were in such want must march here or there without taking food by force when the Yankees were living on the fat of the land.

Sam dismounted as if to examine his horse's foot and spent so much time in the pretended task that the division had passed before he was done.

"Now let us see what can be picked up yonder," he said, pointing to the buildings of a plantation far

away in the distance, and without making any remonstrance, I put the spurs to my horse.

It was not a creditable proceeding for me, a commissioned officer, to thus deliberately disobey orders coming directly from the War Department, and it might have been shame which caused me to ride so rapidly that Sam did not succeed in coming alongside until we were arrived at the plantation.

"You go ahead and do the talking," I said as he reined up just outside the ruined fence where I had halted, and without protest, acting as if it gave him great pleasure to play the part of forager, he dismounted, making his way to the rear door of the dwelling.

He was absent ten minutes or more when he returned with nearly a whole boiled ham and a generous supply of corn-bread, saying as he concealed them inside the blanket which was fastened to his saddle:

"It won't pay to leave this truck where others can see it, and now I reckon we may as well give our horses a generous feed while there is a chance."

"Did they give you the food willingly?" I asked, following him meekly, as if he was the officer and I the private.

"Not what you might call exactly that," he replied with a laugh. "There didn't appear to be any white folks on the place, and the niggers tried to shut the door in my face, consequently we had a bit of an argument."

I felt too much ashamed of the part I was playing to ask any further questions, but went with him to the stables where, removing the bridles from our horses, we fed them with a plentiful supply of corn from the nearest crib, seating ourselves on a convenient pile of fence posts to wait for the animals to eat.

Sam understood that I was not in love with this business of foraging, and he wisely held his peace while my mind went back to those Yankee friends whom I should have looked upon as bitterest foes.

How long we sat there in silence I am unable to say, but it must have been nearly half an hour before Sam sprang to his feet as if in alarm, and then I could hear the hoof beats of horses coming nearer and nearer the stable each instant.

"There are others of Wheeler's force inclined to disobey orders as to foraging," I said with a feeble attempt at a smile as Sam ran toward the corner of the stable, gazing in the direction from which the sounds came.

One glance was sufficient to give him a clear idea of the situation and he cried sharply, running toward his horse:

"They're Yankees! Sherman's foragers or I'm a Dutchman, an' we've got to do some mighty slick ridin', else you're like to see the 46th Maine sooner than may be convenient!"

The trooper was bridling his horse as he spoke, and it can well be supposed that I did not delay in following his example.

When we rode out from the shelter of the stable, as it was necessary to do in order to make a bee line for Wheeler's division, the enemy were hardly more than half a musket shot distant and must have had some suspicion that men in gray were nearabout, else they could not have fired as quickly.

It seemed to me as if my horse had not taken half a dozen strides when a bullet came singing past, clipping a bit of leather from the toe of my boot as neatly as it could have been done with a knife, while

a second missile whistled so near my ear that I was momentarily deafened.

"They shoot well!" Sam shouted as he urged his steed to topmost speed by belaboring him with the scabbard of his saber, and yet I might have passed him readily had I been willing to desert a comrade.

Then it was that we had such a duel as I hope I may never be forced to take part in again, Sam and I riding at breakneck speed, with the Yankees following at almost as good a pace, while all hands emptied their revolvers at least twice without a drop of blood being spilled on either side, so far as I could judge.

The straps of Sam's blanket were cut off close to the saddle, without doing him any injury save as to his feelings, which were sorely hurt.

"There goes the ham!" he cried angrily, "and I had almost rather that bullet struck me than to cut off the supply of provisions as it has. It's lucky the horses have got the corn in their stomachs, else we might lose all that had been gained by foraging!"

We outstripped the enemy in time because our animals were fresher and, two hours later, had arrived at the encampment of Wheeler's division.

We had no more than dismounted and unloosed our saddle girths when an orderly came toward us as he asked:

"Do either of you know Lieutenant Robert Yardley?"

"I am he," was my reply as I faced suddenly around, wondering who could have any desire to see me when there were none in the division with whom I was acquainted.

"General Wheeler wishes to speak with you," the orderly said curtly, and then turning on his heel, he

walked away without waiting to see if I obeyed the command promptly.

"What can the commander want of me?" I asked like a stupid, and Sam Waters said promptly:

"It's some special service, I'll wager my cap. Say, Bob, if he does want anything of the kind an' you need a comrade, count me in like a good fellow, will you?"

"Haven't you got privations enough with the division?"

"I'm deadly sick of hangin' on here, hungry an' knowin' that when we got into a fight there's no show of comin' out ahead. Almost anythin' is better'n that."

"I don't believe the general has any idea in his mind of sendin' me away on special service, but if such should prove to be the case, I'll give you a chance, if the choice rests with me, to stick your nose into yet more danger than you're like to find in the ranks, if indeed that be possible."

There was neither time nor materials with which to make a toilet or even to rid myself of travel stains, therefore I went at once to where the commander was lying on the ground in the midst of his staff.

"Lieutenant Yardley," he said after answering my salute, "I have sent for you to ask if you are ready to do more than a soldier's duty in order to benefit the Cause?"

"Aye, that I would, sir," I replied quickly, not minded to let him know there were some things which I might fear to do, although neither he nor any other should ever guess the fact.

"You have a good horse?"

"A blooded mare, sir, that can hold her own with the best of them."

"I desire to send a message to Ogeechee Church, where General McLaw's division will be found, and I would have whosoever undertakes the journey ride through Millen in advance of the Federal forces."

He ceased speaking as if waiting for me to ask some question, but there was no further information I needed at the time, or so it appeared to me, and I remained silent, whereupon he said with a smile:

"Perhaps the service is one of too much danger for you to volunteer."

"I had not supposed, sir, that you would wait for me to offer my services. It is my duty to obey any commands you may give, and I stand ready to perform the mission to the best of my ability."

"But this is a service for which I prefer you should volunteer, since it is necessary you return to me with word from McLaw, and the way may not be perfectly safe for one who wears a uniform of the same color as yours."

"We Yardleys have never yet stopped to count the cost, sir," I replied, just a bit hurt because he should have fancied I balked at the duty, and he soothed me by saying in a kindly tone:

"Nay, nay, lad, I struck no spark to light your tinder. Your father's services are known full well to all in the army, therefore it was not in my mind that his son would shrink from obeying a command, but the duty is more than ordinarily dangerous, although you are not called upon in any way to play the spy, and I prefer that you shall understand it thoroughly. I know what you can do in the way of fighting, having had my eye on you at one time yesterday."

I know that a flush of pride came into my face as he spoke, for praise from General Wheeler was always both deserved and meant, and he could have

said nothing else which would have made me more eager to undertake the service mentioned.

"Shall I set off at once, sir?" I asked.

"As soon as I can prepare a message. Have you any friend in the division whom you could trust?"

"I know one Sam Waters, sir, formerly of the 143d Mississippi, who was with me in Vicksburg, and is eager now to be off on any errand that smacks of danger. I believe he might be trusted fully."

"Seek him out and make ready for the journey. You will receive from the quartermaster an ample supply of provisions, but it will not be well to burden yourselves with forage for the horses. It is my purpose to duplicate the message which I shall send to McLaw, giving each of you a copy. It is imperative one or the other be delivered, and in the event of being pursued by the enemy you must not think of making battle against him, but let whosoever is best fitted to continue the march, keep on while the other remains behind to delay the pursuit as long as may be possible. Come to me as soon as you are prepared to leave."

I saluted and wheeled about with my best military air, walking proudly toward where Sam Waters awaited my coming, for although it was a dangerous duty which I had to perform, the sense of elation because I had been chosen for the service was very great.

"Well?" Sam asked as I came up, and, mimicking his tone, I replied:

"Well, it seems that you are to have quite as much danger as the veriest glutton could want, if you are minded to go with me."

"That I am, an' right glad of the chance."

"But you don't yet know what is demanded of us."

"It makes no difference so that we leave this division with a show of succeedin' in what is attempted, for as I've said already, this meetin' the enemy with the knowledge that they are bound to whip us every time is heart-sickening."

"Make your horse ready an' we'll go to the quartermaster for rations."

"Has he any to issue?" Sam asked incredulously.

"It must be, otherwise the general would not have ordered us to apply to him."

Ten minutes later, with full haversacks and hearts that were lighter than the circumstances warranted, we presented ourselves to General Wheeler.

"Are you a member of my division?" the commander asked of my companion.

"Aye, sir, that I am an' have been ridin' about at your heels these past six months. Sam Waters, sir, formerly of the 143d Mississippi."

"Has the lieutenant told you where he proposes to go?"

"No, sir; that wasn't necessary. I was achin' for a chance an' only too glad to say 'yes' when he asked if I would go with him."

The general smiled sadly, as I thought, at Sam's eagerness, and then taking from the hand of an orderly two small slips of paper, he folded them again and again until their length and breadth was no more than that of a postage stamp.

"Have you bacon in your haversacks?" he asked, and I replied that we had an ample supply, believing he was thinking simply as to whether we stood a chance of being hungry before arriving at Ogeechee Church.

"Let each take his allowance and in the leanest parts thrust the points of your knives, making a slit

sufficient to hide these pieces of paper. In event of being searched, I fancy the messages will the better escape the attention of the Yankees there than in any other place. If either of you is captured, when questioned do not hesitate to tell all you know concerning this division, for you will be giving the enemy no additional information, since he already has a very good idea of our weakness. Rather than have it appear you are acting as messengers, let it be understood, Lieutenant Yardley, that you are on your way, in company with Waters, to join your regiment, which is now in Savannah."

While the commander was speaking we had been hiding the messages in the bacon, and as he finished I mounted, motioning Sam to do the same.

"Do not spare your animals more than may be absolutely necessary in order to keep them on their feet, and God be with you," General Wheeler said as he raised his hat.

We saluted and set our horses' heads in the direction of the river, counting to follow down the south bank until arriving at the Marion road, where would be found a ford, even though the bridge might have been destroyed.

We were not yet beyond view of the division when Sam made an attack upon his rations, saying in an apologetic tone as he did so:

"If this 'ere ride is to be as dangerous as the general seems to think, I'm allowin' that we may as well meet our fate with full stomachs. It has been a week since I had all I wanted to eat, an' now I feel as if I could get away with all we've got here, an' never a whimper because the bacon isn't cooked."

"What kind of a horse have you got?" I asked and

he replied, speaking indistinctly because of the fullness of his mouth:

"As good as any in the service, so far as wind an' bottom is concerned, but I can't say overly much for his speed. He'll keep up this jog twenty hours, with a halt now an' then, an' not seem to be much the worse for wear."

I believed my mare could do considerably more in the way of staying, providing she was not urged to a smarter pace than Sam's steed was capable of maintaining, therefore so far as horse flesh was concerned we were rich.

Far away in the distance we could see heavy clouds of black smoke, which told that at least a certain portion of Sandersville had been given over to the flames, and we knew full well that Louisville, if not Millen, must soon share the same fate.

Then came the question as to whether the invaders would turn their faces toward Columbia, giving to South Carolina the same treatment which had been dealt out to Georgia, or if they would continue on to Savannah.

The question which was in my mind I put to Sam Waters as we rode and he replied confidently:

"You can make up your mind that the Yankees are bound for Charleston, especially if there are any troops in Sherman's army from Boston. 'Cordin' to the way I look at it, Boston an' Charleston ought to have the fightin' of this 'ere war all to themselves an' let the rest of the country hang back an' sick 'em on, for they've been like a couple of Kilkenny cats toward each other so long as I can remember."

I laughed at Sam's proposition of thus deciding the question as to whether the States had the right to secede and was heartened wonderfully by his con-

fidence that the invading army would go into South Carolina instead of continuing straight on to the nearest seaport, which would be Savannah.

"If they do as you believe, my boy, I shall set out to join my regiment as soon as this journey has come to an end."

"It strikes me that you'd want to go there anyhow, unless you are so bound up with General Wheeler that you don't care to leave him."

"General Hardee is my commander, an' I prefer to be with him, but in case the Yankees push on to attack Savannah, it may be impossible for me to go there."

"If I can get a leave of absence, you may set it down as a fact that I'm able to lead you into Savannah, no matter how many Yankees are hangin' 'round, for the country between Ogeechee Church an' the sea is as familiar to me as the plantation on which I was born."

"You should be able to get a furlough, Sam, for surely General Wheeler must listen to a request of that kind if we carry his message safely an' take him back an answer."

Then we fell to speculating as to what we would do, building air castles, as it were, upon the ashes of the ruined cities through which the Yankees had passed, and before it was time to give the horses a resting spell I had lost a goodly portion of the gloom and forebodings which weighed so heavily upon me when we set out.

Two hours after beginning the journey we halted in a pine grove that bordered the banks of the river, and although Sam had munched at his hardtack and bacon almost incessantly from the time of leaving the

cavalry encampment, he was ready for a noonday meal.

Believing ourselves so far in advance of the Federal force that no danger was to be apprehended, even though we remained there several hours, I built a small fire in order to toast our bread and bacon, wondering meanwhile what Dick Studley and Uncle Rube would say if they could see us making ready the frugal repast and knew that we had with us a more bountiful supply than any other trooper in General Wheeler's command.

"This is the last day for quite a spell that we're goin' to get along on hog an' mouldy bread," Sam said as he held on a pointed stick before the blaze his portion of the bacon, counting on slicing it off as fast as the outside was browned. "Beginnin' from to-night, I'm goin' to start in foragin'. For a while we'll live as high as those friends of ours from Malden, Maine."

"I reckon we can do that without disobeyin' orders," I replied cheerily, for my heart was very light just then. "When fellows are out on a journey like this, they are supposed to live off the country as a matter of course."

I had taken good care to give the horses water as soon as they were sufficiently cool and tethered them on the bank of the creek at some distance from our fire, where they could find a fairly plentiful supply of grass.

"We'll halt here an hour," I said to my comrade after watching the animals feed eagerly on richer herbage than they had found for some time, "an' then it should be possible for us to ride until sunset without drawing rein."

"Yes, we can do that an' not push 'em very hard. I'm thinkin'——"

At that moment we two were sitting side by side with our backs in the direction of Millen, and as Sam spoke I heard what sounded like the crackling of pine needles, as if some one was walking near at hand.

With never a thought in my mind that the Yankees might be so far down the river as this, I turned my head slowly with mild curiosity and an instant later sprang to my feet as a cry of alarm involuntarily escaped my lips.

Coming directly toward us, and not more than thirty paces distant, was a squad of ten or twelve men clad in blue uniforms, and that they were stalking us as if we were deer I understood by the fact that they held their muskets ready for use.

Sam, startled by my cry, leaped to his feet immediately I had shown such evidence of weakness and gave proof of the coolness which I afterward came to know he could display at most trying moments as he asked in a low, quick tone:

"What is to be done? Can we make a break for the horses?"

"Not without the certainty of bein' shot down," I replied in a whisper. "It strikes me our wisest course is to submit quietly, for they are bound to make us prisoners, an' then watch our chance to give them the slip, as we should be able to unless the main army is near at hand."

CHAPTER VI

THE FORD

"THERE must be a Yankee to every square yard of land in the State of Georgia," Sam Waters said as

we stood awaiting the coming of those whose prisoners we virtually were, and I could almost agree with him.

It was certain, to my mind at least, that we had outstripped Sherman's army, being no less than eight or ten miles in advance, but yet here was a squad of men moving about as if with no fear of our people and seemingly having such a force at their backs as to warrant marching around at will.

It bewildered me. This was the first time I had seen that which seemed contrary to all military precedents, and I began to realize how it was that our people were seemingly ignorant of what the enemy was about.

After the war had come to an end all this seeming riddle was made plain, for then we knew that Sherman's force marched from Atlanta on five different routes, the Fifteenth Corps occupying the most southerly position after leaving Gordon, and Kilpatrick's cavalry taking the northerly line of march, the Fourteenth, Seventeenth and Twentieth corps all traversing different roads until arriving at Numpkin Station, when the Fourteenth and Twentieth marched together to Savannah.

Thus is explained why we had good reason for believing that the entire army was pursuing one course when, in fact, it was divided into four parts, distributed along a certain breadth of territory, and at times from five to thirty miles apart.

And now it is possible, although then to Sam Waters and me a mystery, for me to explain why we met this particular squad so far in advance, as we supposed, of the main column.

The Confederate military prison was located at Millen, and General Sherman sent on a large force

in advance of the army, quite naturally hoping to be able to release the prisoners, but his scouts failed to learn what we well knew—namely, that the captured soldiers had, nearly a week before, been removed from Millen to Savannah.

All this has nothing to do with the capture of Sam Waters and myself, except that it explains why, after having ridden so much more rapidly than the army could march, we came upon men whom we had fairly good reasons for believing should have been in the same column as the 46th Maine. They were from the Fifteenth Corps, whose line of march being, as I have said, the most southerly, came through Irwins and Johnson, following the Ogeechee River to the same side as we then were, with orders to push on in the direction of Savannah, making no halt at Millen.

The Yankees made little ceremony about claiming us as prisoners when they were come up, and as a very sensible precautionary measure, at once relieved us of our weapons before entering into conversation.

A young fellow, wearing the straps of a lieutenant, was in command of the party, and I must confess that he treated us as a gentleman should, thereby proving himself a better man than some of our own people, whom I had seen deliberately rob their prisoners even of wearing apparel.

"Where do you come from?" he asked of me, and I replied as the commander had suggested:

"From General Wheeler's cavalry division."

"Do you have any objection to telling me where Wheeler is now?" the Yankee officer asked without any of that bullying which I had been led to believe Northerners so delighted to display toward their prisoners.

"None whatever," I replied promptly, and there-

upon gave him a truthful account of all I knew concerning the division we had just left.

"Why did you come away from your command?" he asked after a brief pause.

"I haven't done so. I was made a prisoner by your people while spendin' a few days at General Cobb's plantation, after having come from the hospital. My regiment is in Savannah, and I was with General Wheeler only because I happened upon his troops by chance the day I escaped.

There was no necessity for me to tell a deliberate lie, for he happened to understand by my words that I was really on my way to Savannah, and then seemingly as a matter of curiosity rather than because he had any right to inquire into the affair, he asked concerning my escape, whereupon I told him as much as I pleased, not deeming it wise to advertise the fact of having such good friends in the 46th Maine.

"We will see to it that you don't get away again until properly exchanged," he said laughingly, "an' I believe I may promise that you will find your way into Savannah with us almost as quickly as if you traveled independently."

"As to that I have some doubts," was my reply, "an' would prefer to keep on in my own way, but since that cannot be I consider we are fortunate in havin' been captured by——"

"Lieutenant Ames, of the 43d Ohio."

I gave him my name and regiment and also that of Sam Waters, after which preparations were made for an extended halt, when the Yankees had an opportunity of showing Sam the difference between their rations and ours, for we were given, as friends rather than prisoners, such a dinner as I have never seen equaled in camp.

During the meal, and while we lay stretched out on the ground enjoying a siesta, I learned that Lieutenant Ames and his squad were acting as scouts and counted on riding across to Millen during the night, their corps being encamped five or six miles in advance, near the main road.

It was in my mind that we would be sent on to the main force at once, but as the time passed I began to believe the lieutenant was not willing to divide his small party for such purpose, and therefore counted on taking us with him on the reconnaissance, which was not much to my liking until late in the afternoon when, the officer being at the river bank taking a bath, Sam Waters and I were left comparatively alone.

"I reckon these Yankees count on crossin' the river hereabout, eh?" Sam whispered to me.

"It must be if they intend to ride to Millen."

"Do you know of any ford hereabout?"

"No, but doubtless there are many places at this season of the year where even a man on foot can get across by wadin' waist deep."

"I am not so certain of that. It strikes me some of our men said that it wasn't possible to cross everywhere. There are plenty of sink holes in the river."

"It will suit me just as well if they don't get over," I replied carelessly. "I am not minded to give the mare so much of a journey as would be necessary if we rode to Millen."

"A prisoner of war needn't worry about his horse, for he isn't likely to keep one very long, but I'm hopin' these fellows will do their level best to get on the other side of the stream."

"Why?" I asked in surprise.

"Well, you see, they're allowin' to go after dark,

although why there's any need of doin' that I can't figger out, because we've got nobody 'round here to trouble 'em."

"But why do you want to go on this reconnaissance?" I asked almost petulantly. "We are prisoners, not likely to get away as easily as I did from the 46th, an' there's no good reason why we should be called upon for any unnecessary exertion."

"It looks like it might be a dark night, eh?"

"Well, what of that?"

"S'posin' I claim to know the fords of this river?"

"Look here, Sam," I whispered impatiently, "if you've got any plan in your head, out with it. We may not have any too much time for such a roundabout way of gettin' at a matter."

"I don't know as it's what you'd rightly call a plan, but I was thinkin' that if we didn't start until after dark, an' they let us keep our hosses, an' I claimed to know the fords, that it would be the only natural thing for us to go ahead an' show 'em the way. After we got started an' was well into the stream I might yell somethin' 'bout not findin' bottom, an' perhaps we wouldn't, you know. Then we'd start the hosses swimmin', throw ourselves outer the saddle where the animals would shelter us from bullets an' take the chances of paddlin' down stream a spell. I don't know as it would work, but where would be the harm if we made a failure of it?"

I had little hope that we would be able to escape from these men who naturally wanted the credit of bringing in prisoners and would guard us carefully, yet Sam's plan appealed to me strongly. Of course it would be necessary that everything was in our favor. First, the night must be darker than usual; then it was essential we strike deep water when get-

ting a short distance from the shore, and, what was of vastly more importance, that we could so far guide our horses in the stream as to get them near the opposite bank, when the chance of our being shot might be lessened. If that combination worked as we would have it, then escape was more than possible.

"It is a good plan, Sam, an' since you cooked it up, I will follow your leading. Tell me exactly what I am to do."

"That won't be any great lesson. It's only a case of your splashin' about in the water when I do. We'll yell like all possessed for a minute an' then strike out for the other shore the best we know how."

There was nothing in the scheme on which any great hope could be builded, and yet the more I turned it over in my mind the stronger became the conviction that the chances were even, and straightway my heart grew light, for there was a possibility, even now when it seemed as if we were doomed to a long term of imprisonment, that the general's message might be delivered in fairly good time.

The men from Ohio did not appear in any great haste to resume the march. It was probable that Lieutenant Ames had specific orders as to when he should cross the river and the exact time of returning from Millen, if it so chanced he arrived there, but at all events they lounged around like a party of boys on a holiday until an hour after sunset.

It surely looked as if fortune was favoring us. There were no clouds in the sky, but from the river to the lowlands arose a mist, next cousin to a fog, which would serve, particularly between the banks of the stream where the wind sent it up in greater volume, to screen our movements from view in case we attempted the escape.

Lieutenant Ames and I discussed the war from each other's standpoints, and I soon learned that he, like all the Yankees whom I had met, believed this march of Sherman's to the sea was but a portion of the beginning of the end, which had been started by the fall of Vicksburg.

More than once I said to myself while we talked that unless I speedily found a stiff-backed secessionist to strengthen my faith, I might become convinced that our Cause was indeed lost.

As a matter of fact, I argued with my captor even when not in the mood for conversation, to the end that we might longer delay the attempted crossing of the river, and it was not until about an hour after sunset that he put to me the question:

"Do you know the fords nearabout here?"

"I have never been in this section of the State before," was my reply, whereupon Sam Waters spoke up, not eagerly but as if simply to join in the conversation:

"I have been on this bloomin' river quite a bit, an' ought to know where to find a crossin'."

"Would you be willin' to lead us?" Lieutenant Ames asked.

"Well, as for the matter of that, I don't know why I shouldn't, even though I be a prisoner. You have treated us decent, an' while I'm not achin' to travel from here to Millen, it won't be such a bad dose in good company. We've had more exercise within the past eight an' forty hours than you fellers, an' if it's allowed us to keep our hosses till you turn us over to the prison guard, I'll do my best at showin' the way out."

Sam failed to say which way out, and I detected an odd inflection in his tone, such as conveyed much

meaning to me but was unheeded by Lieutenant Ames.

"You shall keep the horses whether we make a trade or not," the officer said with a laugh. "I am not given to robbing prisoners, even though they may be able to ride while I must walk. Of course, once we are with the army, you will find them confiscated for Uncle Sam's use."

"That goes without sayin'," the trooper replied with a laugh. "But, to tell the truth, I couldn't walk from here to Millen an' back to-night after all we've been through with. You Yanks have had full stomachs all this time, while we Johnnies have felt our ribs rattlin' more'n once."

This was taking the first step toward carrying out Sam's plan, and it had turned exactly as if the Ohio men were conspiring to aid us.

Then, in order to gain more time to the end that it might be darker when we set off, Sam proposed that some one be sent with him while he went up and down the bank looking for such landmarks as would tell him where to find the best ford, and no less than half an hour was spent in this alleged necessary labor.

Not until all this had been done did the lieutenant give the order to set off, and, as a matter of course, when we were come to a break in the bank down which the horses could travel, Sam led the way as a guide should, I following immediately behind and Lieutenant Ames walking at my side.

Then it was, with a view of making it seem as if there was no thought in my mind of escaping the imprisonment, that I said as if in apology:

"It doesn't make me feel overly comfortable to ride while you are walking, lieutenant. Therefore suppose we turn and turn about durin' the reconnais-

sance, you spendin' the same amount of time in the saddle that I do. Sam shall follow my example, givin' to each of the men in turn a mount."

"I guess I will accept that offer, but I do not care to ride a strange horse across the river."

"The mare is gentle enough," I replied, slyly jerking one rein in order to make her prance a bit. "It is only necessary to let her know who is the master."

"You will get her across the river better than I can," the lieutenant replied carelessly, and then the splashing of water told me that Sam had entered the stream.

I knew full well that he had done so at a point where he believed the water to be deepest, therefore it was I braced myself for the plunge which I knew the mare must give when she lost her footing, and it was as if we had no more than left the shore before Sam cried as if terrified:

"Keep more to the left, boys! I must be on the edge of the ford an' have struck deep water!"

At that moment my steed gave a quick start which told me she had left the bank and was in the channel.

"Keep to the left!" I cried, feigning to force the mare in the direction of which I had spoken, but simply intending to urge her forward that we might be screened from view by the mist.

I heard Lieutenant Ames shouting for his men to halt and then he cried to me:

"There is no ford here! The bank makes off abruptly!"

"Keep to the left!" I cried again. "If I can get this stupid beast around it will be possible to find it."

By this time Sam Waters was lost even to my view, and I could hear no sound betokening his whereabouts.

"Halt! You Johnnies, halt! Halt or I shall fire!" Came a voice from the shore. Page 89.

With Sherman to the Sea.

Then leaping quickly from the saddle, I swam by the side of the horse, still urging her forward at an angle with the course we had been pursuing, and before one could have counted twenty came that command which I was expecting to hear:

"Halt! You Johnnies, halt! Halt or I shall fire!"

I prodded the mare with my thumb to force her on yet faster, but was careful to make no noise, and like phantoms we slipped down the river, each second increasing the distance between ourselves and the men from Ohio, while the friendly mist must have shut us out from view entirely.

"Make ready! Aim! Fire!" came the words in sharp, quick tones from the lieutenant, followed instantly by the crackling of musketry.

I literally held my breath in fear lest I should feel the little mare cringe as a bullet struck her, but not so much as the whistling of a missile could be heard, and I fancy the Yankees did as soldiers so often will when shooting in the darkness—elevated their weapons until the balls flew high above the unseen target.

Now we had a full minute, perhaps more, before they could reload, and all the while were being carried, by the current and our own exertions, down stream as swiftly as a man could run.

"If they will only stand there shootin' at us long enough!" I whispered to myself, praying most fervently that the lieutenant from Ohio might not take it into his head to pursue us on the opposite bank.

Another crackling of musketry, but no token of the bullets, and then came the clang of steel ramrods in the barrels as the pieces were being reloaded again, while a prayer of thanksgiving went up from my

heart because that Yankee was so stupid as to remain there shooting at random, when the race might speedily have been ended had he sent his men down the bank.

I believed of a verity we had a five-minutes' start of them, even if they set out immediately after the third volley was fired. Certain it is, however, from that time we heard nothing betokening their whereabouts, and very soon my mare's head was overlapping the flank of Sam's horse.

"It was not a bad trick for a couple of half-starved Johnnies!" the fellow whispered, and I fancied he was chuckling over the success of his plan.

"How much further do you count on swimmin'?"

"I'm feelin' for the bank now. As soon as we strike a shelving bottom we'll go ashore."

Ten minutes perhaps elapsed before Sam found that for which he sought, and then we scrambled up the bank, very wet as to body, but wonderfully happy in mind.

"If them 'ere messages had been put in our clothes instead of the bacon, I reckon they wouldn't have been of much account by this time," Sam said as he shook himself like a dog. "The next time that bloomin' lieutenant takes a prisoner he'll come mighty near sendin' him back to the guard an' not tryin' to tote him all over the country."

"Better do your crowin' after we've met General McLaw," I whispered. "You are a long way from bein' out of the woods yet, for we know to a certainty that nearabout here, on the opposite bank, is a full army corps of Yankees, an' there's no tellin' how many separate squads may be scattered around the country in our path. Have you any idea of the path we ought to take?"

"Well, I'm reckonin' you don't want to turn into Millen, seein's how we must be quite a bit past it an' might meet there them as it wouldn't be pleasant to see."

"No, no," I said impatiently. "If you have any idea of the proper direction, strike a straight course for Ogeechee Church."

"The only way I know is to follow the river until we come to the bridge on the Statesboro road, an' then ride back."

"Strike out then, an' don't let the grass grow under your feet. If we come upon any small number of the blue-coats, it must be a matter of runnin' them down, for we can't afford to be taken twice in the same night."

"It's a pretty tough lookout to be set adrift here where the country is what you might say swarmin' with Yankees, an' not so much as a knife to help out in case of a scrimmage," Sam grumbled, and I said sharply:

"It is little less than a crime to complain now, when we have been so fortunate as to make our escape."

CHAPTER VII

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE

As nearly as I could judge, we must have been within eighteen or twenty miles of our destination at the time of parting company with our captors, and by making the turn in order to set a course from Statesboro bridge the journey might possibly be increased four or five miles.

Had I been alone the distance could have been traversed in two and a half hours at the outside, but held back by the dullness of Sam's horse, we did not hope to arrive, under the most favoring circumstances, in much less than twice that length of time.

We were free to do as we pleased, for the time being at least, but with the Yankees on either side it was an open question whether our freedom of movement might not be cut short even while we were speculating as to when we should arrive at our destination.

"It looks as if we Johnnies were pretty much driven out of Georgia, don't it?" Sam said as we rode side by side, his horse urged on at full speed and the mare doing no more than ordinary exercise. "If all these Yanks tell the truth, there's nothin' that can stop General Sherman from goin' about where he pleases, an' our people would starve to death if they followed his trail at any time within the next eight months. Gee! but them blue-coats live high, eh?"

"It doesn't do any good to think about such things, Sam," I said bitterly. "We know that our generals are doin' all men can, but——"

"You're thinkin' that if them as are loafin' 'round Richmond tryin' to run this war would keep their noses outer the mess we might have a better show."

I was actually startled when Sam thus put my thoughts into words. I had heard such matters discussed privately by our officers, but until this moment had no idea the rank and file were talking them over.

"Do the soldiers complain because there is interference from Richmond way?" I asked, and he replied promptly:

"You'd think so if you could hear 'em now an' then when things get hot. Because a man's a private

that's no reason why he's a fool. I wouldn't let on to a Yank that I'd kinder lost hope, but I ain't the only man wearin' a gray coat who believes we've got mighty near to the end of our rope. Don't get the idee inter your mind that I won't fight just as hard, an' starve jest as long, as if it was a dead sure thing that we'd come out ahead before this year is ended."

I would not trust myself to make reply. It seemed much like playing the traitor to speculate upon our being whipped already, although way down in my heart I was rapidly beginning to believe that the end could not be deferred much longer.

We rode in silence during a full hour, having seen nothing to cause alarm, and then pulled up to give the horses a breathing spell.

"I reckon we've run down past the Yankee lines," Sam said as he led his horse to the river for a drink. "They can't be as far south as this, else we stand little show of findin' General McLaw at Ogeechee."

"I reckon the road is clear from here on, but there'll be some fine steerin' needed when we go back."

"We might strike over to Statesboro an' then across country to the creek which runs between that town an' Paris. I'm allowin' General Wheeler comes mighty near Millen by to-morrow night, else the Yankees will get so far ahead of him that he can't catch 'em this side of Savannah."

Then we rode on once more amid the blackness of the night, and as the conversation lagged because Sam had grown tired of talking without receiving any reply, my thoughts went out to the grievous condition of our people. Before Vicksburg fell we were confident of success, having been told that one man of the South could whip in a fair fight no less than five

from the North and that every European nation was waiting with impatience to take sides with us.

Slowly but surely had come the awakening. We learned that a man in blue was as good a soldier as the one in gray and failed to hear of any nation who favored our secession so long as we held to slavery.

It is only reasonable to suppose that our leaders soon came to understand the true situation, but we who fought, and marched, and starved were long in discovering that which we feared to know.

Before that night's ride had come to an end I was convinced that from all our future suffering nothing would be effected save the prolongation of a useless struggle, and with this conviction came the determination to show myself a true son of the soil, never openly acknowledging defeat until the last of our armies had surrendered.

A new day was dawning when we rode into Ogeechee Church and were halted by a sentinel in the outskirts of the settlement.

"Messengers from General Wheeler to General McLaw," I cried, reining in the mare, and before summoning the officer of the day the sentinel asked eagerly:

"Have you seen anythin' of the Yankees?"

"We met with some on the other side of the river about opposite Millen, were taken prisoners, but succeeded in givin' them the slip. That is all the information I can give, so see to it that we are sent to the general's quarters without delay."

"I reckon we haven't got much of any business 'round here," the man muttered, thus showing that I was not the only faint-hearted Confederate in this section of the country, and then he called for the officer.

Ten minutes later we had extracted the messages from our bacon and the general was reading them by the light of a camp-fire, for, owing to the heavy mist, it was almost as cold as in mid-winter.

Then we were called upon to tell what we knew about the Federal forces, and when the story was ended General McLaw ordered us to feed our horses and look after our own comfort to the end that we might be prepared to set out on the return journey by noon.

It can well be imagined that our first care was to equip ourselves with weapons to replace those taken by the Yankees, and not until then did we obey the general's order.

Again we ate bacon and mouldy hardtack while the enemy feasted on the fat of the land, which caused Sam Waters to say wistfully:

"I wish we might have been kept prisoners forty-eight hours or so till we got filled up in good shape."

"This is luxury compared with what we had at Vicksburg," I replied with a mirthless laugh, and Sam said, a certain tinge of irritation in his tone:

"I never could get any satisfaction outer lookin' back on what was worse. Because we starved in Vicksburg is no good reason why we should count this a Thanksgivin' dinner."

"True for you, Sam, but since better can't be had, it is wisest to eat what's before us an' then go to sleep, for it isn't certain we won't spend a good portion of the night in the saddle."

Weary as we were, it was possible to sleep even amid the noises and hum of the camp as the men worked like beavers, throwing up earthworks which it was believed would be effective in turning the Federal Army from the course Sherman had marked out,

and not until an orderly shook me roughly by the shoulder did I awaken.

"The general will see you now. Your horses have had an extra feed since you laid down, in order that you may get away at once."

We lost no time in finding the commander, and then were given duplicate messages as before, which we secreted in the same way as when leaving General Wheeler's camp.

No instructions were given us. We were simply ordered to return as quickly as possible, and we set off down the Statesboro road, still very weary as to body and not entirely comfortable in mind.

Sam was not in a talkative mood, and I had too many gloomy thoughts to care for conversation. Therefore we rode in silence an hour or more, when, having come to a small brook, I proposed to give the horses a breathing spell.

My comrade was out of the saddle almost before the words had been spoken, and when we had quenched our thirst I heard that which had been drowned by the thud of the horses' hoofs.

"What is it?" I asked, standing in a listening attitude and needing no information, for I had heard the booming of artillery too often not to know what it was.

"I reckon the general has come across some of the gang that counted on sendin' us up to Boston as prisoners," Sam said grimly. "How far away do you reckon it is?"

"Not more than five or six miles, an' in the direction of Millen," I replied, now grown excited by the almost positive knowledge that a battle of some size was in progress. "The horses must take their breathin' spell another time, for we can't afford to

idle here while our people are showin' what can be done."

In a twinkling our loosened girths were tightened, and at the full speed of Sam's steed we rode in the direction from which came the noise of heavy guns as if our one desire in life was to face death.

Before we had ridden three miles the noise died away and my heart sank heavily, for I knew we had not whipped the Federals in that short time, consequently our people must have been badly cut up.

"Give him the spurs, Sam!" I cried, irritated by the slow pace of my comrade's horse. "If they're gettin' the worst of it there's all the more reason why we should make haste."

"He's doin' the best he can," Waters replied gruffly, "an' even if he wasn't, I can't see why we should rush so hard. The Yanks have whipped us, an' we shan't do any good by helpin' out a retreat."

He had hardly more than ceased speaking before a body of cavalry came in sight from the northward, riding as if their horses were jaded and without any heed to military formation.

"We may as well hold up, for they're retreatin' this way," Sam said as he came to a halt, and I followed his example.

We had indeed been whipped again, and as might have been expected, for it was not likely General Wheeler had made an attack with any hope of besting the enemy, but only to check his progress for a time. Had he known that General McLaw was throwing up works at Ogeechee Church as if to make a stand, there would have been less useless sacrifice of life.

We soon were made acquainted with the story, which was not different from what we had heard

several times before. Our people had fallen upon the enemy, believing only a few regiments confronted them, and learned all too late that an overpowering force was close at hand.

While we were talking with the men General Wheeler and his staff rode up, and to him we delivered both our messages, lest one differed slightly from the other.

Beyond thanking us mechanically, he said nothing, and from the expression on his face I believed there was in his mind much the same thought as had lately gained lodgment in mine.

We rode back to the creek which runs west and south of Statesboro and halted on its banks, eight miles or more from the settlement.

Two hours elapsed before all the force arrived, and then to my surprise I saw that one regiment was bringing with them fifteen or twenty prisoners, but I gave no particular heed to the Yanks, save to say petulantly to a captain with whom I had been speaking:

"It would be more sensible to let those fellows go rather than tote them around the country. This command isn't in very good shape to burden itself in such a manner."

"Very true, lieutenant, yet it would be a dangerous precedent to set if we turned them loose," the captain replied. "They are all we've got to show for twenty or thirty of our best men, and after coming out of the hole we rode into, there's a deal of satisfaction in having some proof that we did a little work."

Sam Waters had made a shelter for himself and me at some distance up the creek, where was a good feeding-place for the horses, and on parting with the captain I turned my face in that direction, eager to

be alone, for this last reverse, even though it was of no great importance, served to increase the gloom which was settling down upon me.

It was near nightfall. Sam was toasting bacon before a small fire. The horses were cropping the rich grass a short distance away and there was a certain home look about our poor quarters that soothed me wonderfully.

"Well, I reckon the next halt will be Savannah," Sam said cheerily as I came up. "It don't stand to reason that General McLaw can hold his position very long, an' there's nowhere else for us to go."

"I'll be glad to get there," I replied, throwing myself on the grass and lazily watching the frugal culinary operations. "It's certain the Yanks can't get in there, or even past Fort McAllister, an' it will be an agreeable change to see them checked, after carryin' matters with a high hand entirely across the State."

"Aye, lieutenant, *I'll* be glad to get there if for no other reason than that I'm hankerin' mightily after a feed of fish an' oysters. This 'ere rusty bacon comes nigh to turnin' my stomach. Hello, what raw recruit is that who thinks he can bunk in anywhere he takes a notion?" and Sam looked angrily at a trooper who was coming leisurely in the direction of our phantom tent.

"Perhaps the general wants us to carry another message," I suggested, rising indolently on my elbow.

"If it's as far as Savannah, I'll get into the saddle without a word, but I ain't quite up to mixin' it with Sherman's army while it's scattered all over the Confederacy, three men to the square yard."

"Do either of you know Lieutenant Robert Yard-

ley?" the trooper cried as soon as he was come within hailing distance.

"That is my name," and I sprang up quickly, convinced that the commander had yet more work for us to perform.

"We gobbled up a few Yanks back there near Millen, an' one of them is mighty anxious to know if you are with this force."

"What does he look like?" I asked eagerly, wondering if by any chance our people had succeeded in gathering up Mr. Stubbs.

"An old fellow who claims to have been runnin' the Federal end of this war. If one believed all he said, it might be thought the enemy had been crippled seriously by what we believed an unimportant capture."

"It's Uncle Rube!" I exclaimed in astonishment, and then seeing by the expression on the trooper's face that he was mystified by my words, I hastened to add: "It must be the old Yankee from Maine who has done me more than one big favor. Show me where he is, for I owe him a debt which can't be easily paid."

The man wheeled about as if angered because I displayed any personal anxiety regarding one of the enemy after all we had suffered at the hands of the Federals, and I followed, with Sam Waters close at my heels, chuckling audibly at this queer turn in the fortunes of war.

"Wouldn't it be the biggest kind of a joke if we could lug that old man down to Savannah with us?" he said laughingly. "He'd have a story to tell when he got up into Maine again!"

I made no reply. It saddened me to know, as I believed I did, that the old man was a prisoner, for

his capture was of no importance to the Cause, while I felt certain he would be broken-hearted at being thus separated from his "detachment."

It was indeed Uncle Rube, as I saw when arriving at that point where the prisoners were herded like cattle on the open plain, a dozen or more of our men standing guard over them, but I was literally amazed by the manner of his greeting.

"Hello, lieutenant!" he cried when we came in view. "Where did you pick up that fellow who borrowed good money an' paid it back in shin-plasters that wasn't worth fifty cents a peck?"

The old man was far from being broken in spirit because of his misfortune, and I secretly rejoiced to find him in such a mood.

"I have brought him down here so that he may square up the debt in better fashion than when he tried to do it at Vicksburg," I replied, and Sam Waters stepped forward quickly, shaking the old man heartily by the hand, much to the surprise of the guards, who I could see were not well pleased because we were thus willing to fraternize with the enemy.

"But he squared that off my books quite a spell ago," Uncle Rube said jauntily, "an' if these 'ere Johnnies hadn't cleaned me out mighty soon after I fell inter their hands, I'd be in position to make another lendin'."

"Who was it robbed this man?" I asked angrily, turning upon the guards. Then, understanding that it was necessary I make some explanation as to my great interest in one wearing a uniform of blue, I hastened to add: "This man and his comrades not only treated me like a friend a few days ago, when I was a prisoner in their hands, but would have divided equally all they possessed had I asked it, and

wound up a long list of favors by givin' me an opportunity to escape. Who has robbed him?" I asked again.

"None of us took the prisoners," one of the guards replied gravely. "It strikes me as bein' pretty harsh to call it robbery when we take from the Yankees what little they've got to square up for all that's been stolen since Sherman's bummers came into Georgia."

"Don't fret your head, Bob Yardley, about what they got from me. The money part of it wasn't over an' above thirty cents, seein's I hid the rest in my cap, but I did lose a jackknife that comes nigh to breakin' my heart, 'cause I've had it ever since I was a boy—that is to say, it wasn't exactly the same knife, for I traded five or six times with Job Lord, but I've never been without one in my pocket before, an' it makes me feel lost, so to speak."

"I'll find your jackknife for you, Uncle Rube, if any one in this command has got it, an' perhaps you'll allow that will square up the difference between what you call good money an' shin-plasters," Sam Waters said with a laugh, but the old man shook his head, not willing to lose an opportunity to drive a sharp bargain.

"I ain't allowin' as that would be quite a fair trade, 'cause it was what you might call a mighty good knife, an' the like of it ain't to be found in these parts; but I'd be willin' to allow somethin' on account, if it so be there's anythin' owin', which I don't claim."

By this time those who were guarding the prisoners began to look upon the old man with more of favor, seeing in him a fund of amusement if properly handled.

"Tell me how you were taken, Uncle Rube," I

asked. "Surely it must have been by some strategy that so able a soldier an' tactician as you are was made a prisoner in the midst of a large army."

"I'll agree that I'm a fairly good soldier, Bob, but I'd like to know a little more about this 'ere 'tactician' business before I subscribe to it. So far as my gettin' gobbled up by these 'ere Johnnies is concerned, there ain't much to wonder at. You see, 'cordin' to my way of thinkin', Uncle Billy was makin' a mistake when he pulled up at such a one-hoss town as Millen, instead of pushin' on to where we might have made our mark. So I was out huntin' for him, 'cause it don't stand to reason that I want things to go wrong, when down come a lot of Johnnies a-whoopin' an' a-yellin', an' the first thing I knowed I was mixed all up with hosses an' men till you couldn't more'n wink comfortably. What was to be done? I wasn't feelin' jest right to-day, an' didn't have the heart to tackle the whole boilin' of 'em, so I says to myself, says I, 'If they want to take Uncle Reuben Smart on a little excursion, why, I'll go with 'em, but I won't agree to stay any great length of time,' an' here I am."

"Have they treated you well?" I asked solicitously.

"Well, middlin', lad, middlin'. I ain't complainin', 'cause I wasn't built that way. The man don't live that ever heard a word of complaint come out of my lips. Of course I got shook up a bit, you know, but that only seemed kinder nat'ral, 'cause you Johnnies don't get hold of a prisoner very often, an' you're bound to make the most of him when he does fall into your hands. There was one man started in to be real disagreeable, but I says to him, says I soothin' like: 'Look here, neighbor, I've got a friend in the Con-

federate Army, an officer, who is what you might call a chum, 'cordin' to how things was run when we messed together, an' it don't go very much agin the grain for me to toddle along with you for a spell.' With that the man must have got the idee that I wanted to change sides in this 'ere fight, but, bless your soul, he soon got that out of his mind, for I told him, says I: 'I'm goin' with you jest for a kind of a jaunt, an' comin' back when I get ready.' With that he up an' laughs, swings his sword 'round mighty dangerous, an' tells me to go over where they had herded up this 'ere crowd. So I goes, an' in 'bout fourteen seconds we was doin' our level best to keep up with the hosses, 'cause by that time the Johnnies had found out that they was mighty near bein' in a hornets' nest."

"Did the men make you run while they rode?" I asked indignantly.

"Well, that seemed what they was countin' on, lad, but it couldn't be done, 'cause I says to 'em, says I: 'Here, if you want me to go with you, the thing has got to be done in decent shape, else I'll hog right up an' make trouble.' With that the man who was draggin' me along says: 'You can get up behind me if you'll agree to hold on.' I clumb on to his stirrups, sayin', says I: 'I'd be a mighty big fool not to hold on, neighbor, wouldn't I? Do you think at my time of life a man can afford to fall off a hoss jest to spite somebody else?' So we got along sociable-like till stoppin' here, an' then I was invited to give up what little trinkets I had about me. That's how I lost the jackknife an' thirty cents."

"See here, lieutenant," Sam Waters whispered, "we can't let that old man stay with these prisoners. What's to be done?"

"Of course he won't stay with the others! You wait here an' keep him amused while I speak with General Wheeler, if it be possible to get his ear at such a time as this."

"It ain't so certain that I can amuse him very much, but I'll bet great big dollars he'll make fun for me," Sam said with a chuckle, and then turning to Uncle Rube, I asked:

"Are you willin' to give your parole in case I can induce the commander to allow you the freedom of the camp?"

"Well, now, Bob, I don't know how to answer that question. It's altogether owin' to what kind of a chance there will be for my sneakin' off when I get ready to go."

I realized that the old man did not understand the gravity of my position, and beckoning him aside so that our conversation might not be overheard by the guard, I whispered:

"See here, Uncle Rube, I'm sorry to say that our people haven't the facilities for looking after the comfort of their prisoners that you Yankees have. Now it would be a most serious matter if you were to be sent into a stockaded prison, an' I beg of you, agree to give your parole, in which case Sam Waters an' I will do the best we can to make the time pass pleasantly."

The old man appeared to be deliberating a few seconds and then asked innocently:

"How long do you reckon it will be, Bob, before Uncle Billy gobbles all of you up?"

"That won't be as easy a task as you fancy, Uncle Rube. I'll admit the Federals have got the upper hand of us here in Georgia, so far as the inland cities

are concerned, but don't deceive yourself with the idea that this war is goin' to be ended immediately, because of the comparatively bloodless victories you have gained. Think rather of the sufferin' which you would endure in one of our prisons, and give me your parole, even as I gave you mine."

"But, see here, Bob, you held out for eight an' forty hours only. How about my doin' the same?"

"I am afraid that wouldn't be accepted, for the very good reason that you would have an opportunity of seein' that which it is of vital importance should not be known to the enemy. Say a week or ten days—or, what is better, agree to remain without effort at escape until you may be exchanged. If, as you believe, the war is near an end, that isn't very much to do, an' I assure you that neither Sam Waters nor I can do as much toward favorin' an escape as your detachment did in my case, for I am here among strangers. My regiment is at Savannah."

"Are you thinkin' of goin' down that way, Bob?"

"As soon as General Wheeler will give his consent I shall do so, an' Sam Waters counts on goin' with me if he can get a furlough."

"Then it's a bargain. I ain't no ways set agin stoppin' down there till Uncle Billy comes, for it can't be a great spell longer before he gathers in the whole boilin' of you."

This assurance that he would make no effort to escape was likely to free the old man from painful restraint, but there was a grave and serious doubt in my mind as to whether, at this time, General Wheeler would be willing he should accompany us, even if he was inclined to accept a parole from a private soldier.

CHAPTER VIII

DESERTION

UNDER ordinary circumstances I should have had no doubt but that the proposition to parole a prisoner who had befriended me would have been acceded to without question, but now when it was necessary for the command to move quickly, with the prospect that there would be plenty of hard fighting, there was a grave doubt in my mind as to whether General Wheeler would show the favor which I desired.

As a matter of fact, before succeeding in finding the commander, I came to believe that my request would be flatly refused, and with good reason. But I was determined, cost what it might, to prevent the old man from being sent to a military prison, and therefore brought the matter to the general's attention in a different manner than I should have done had there seemed to me a reasonable show of success.

I found him with a portion of his staff seated on the ground in a small growth of pines and looking far different from the dashing cavalry commander whom I had seen a year previous.

It was not for me to approach without permission. Therefore after advancing as near as seemed proper, I stood shifting first from one foot and then to the other, like an uneasy schoolboy, until, seeing and recognizing me, he asked in a friendly tone:

"Have you something to say to me, lieutenant?"

"Yes, sir," I replied, stepping nearer and saluting. "I ask permission to join my regiment in Savannah unless it so be you have urgent work for me here."

"I have no right to detain you, sir, and there is no

particular reason why I should attempt to do so. You have been of service to me, and I thank you."

He looked away, as if believing that the interview had naturally come to an end, but I had only paved the way—spoken the introduction, so to put it, to the real business.

It was not such a simple matter to find the words which I needed, but after some mental floundering I began, probably looking as awkward as I felt.

"Among the prisoners which have just been taken, sir, is an old man from one of the Maine regiments. He is a peculiar character, not much of a soldier, but having great faith in his supposed military knowledge. He and half a dozen of his comrades have kept up what the men of the regiment sportively call an "independent detachment," of which he is the leader. I met some of the party nearabout Vicksburg before it was besieged and finally all of them on that sad day when the enemy occupied the city, but afterward heard nothin' of them until when I was taken into Sherman's encampment as a prisoner. Then this man strained every nerve to save me from being put under guard, succeeding finally in having my parole accepted for the space of forty-eight hours. Then, when it had expired and they could do so honorably, I was shown a way of escape. In the engagement where I accompanied your brigade he saved my life at no little risk of being misunderstood by his companions. Now this old man, Uncle Rube, as they call him, is in our hands here, and I ask that you accept his parole until we shall arrive in Savannah, allowin' him to accompany me, I pledgin' my word that he will keep his, at least until we are within the city, where, if it so pleases him, he may be surrendered to the authorities."

I ceased speaking for an instant, striving to get some idea from the expression on the general's face as to whether he might be favorably inclined toward the proposition, and, failing in reading anything there, added:

"It is not necessary, sir, that I be told mine is an unusual request, but after all that has occurred, it seems to me I am in honor bound to help this Yankee in every way possible within my line of duty as a soldier. I am willin' to stake my life that he will abide by whatsoever promises I shall make in his name, and assure you, sir, that he is not, in my humble opinion, of any great value to the enemy while in their ranks."

The general smiled kindly as I ceased again and I knew the decision would be in my favor.

"I quite agree with you that the request is unusual and yet can understand very well your position. You have my permission to go to Savannah, taking with you this man, and I have no doubt but that once there you will do your full duty, as is demanded from every son of the South."

I thanked him to the best of my ability and withdrew, although the business was really not yet concluded. Sam Waters was eager to go with me, and I more than willing he should do so. To make the request that one of his cavalrymen, whom he needed, be allowed to leave the ranks for no other reason than because of a whim, was something which I did not believe General Wheeler would look upon with favor.

Therefore it was I sacrificed Sam's interests to those of Uncle Rube's, fearing lest if I asked too much everything might be denied me.

Before I had taken many steps in the direction of

the place where the prisoners were herded an officer overtook me, saying as he came alongside:

"You might have some trouble in gaining possession of your pet Yankee by simply making the statement that you acted under permission of the commander, therefore I am sent to see that the goods are properly and promptly delivered."

"You are very kind, sir," I said, observing a colonel's straps upon his shoulders.

"Well, to tell the truth, lieutenant, I have quite a curiosity to see this man, after hearing the story which you told General Wheeler. I had not believed that a Yankee from Maine would voluntarily extend a kindly hand to us alleged rebels."

As we walked toward the prisoners I told the gentleman my story more in detail, and, after informing the officer of the guard that I had due authority to release the soldier whom I designated, the colonel stood nearby in order to hear what Uncle Rube might say. If he failed to find amusement in the scene then was he lacking in a sense of the comical.

In order to draw the old man out for the benefit of the spectators, I said when he came forward:

"You are to be my guest, Uncle Rube, even as I was yours in the Yankee camp. I cannot promise you such good living as you gave me, nor will I agree to open a way of escape as readily as your people did, but it shall be share an' share alike between us for so long a time as you are forced to remain within our lines."

"An' that won't be a very great spell, lad," the old man replied, accepting his release as a matter of course, and much as though conferring a favor upon me. "I'm lookin' to see Uncle Billy gobble up this whole army before many days, an' consequently my

stay will be short. I'd give you more of my company if I could, an' be willin' to put General Wheeler on to a trick or two."

"Then you might give him some valuable points?"

"I reckon, lad, if I should take hold in downright earnest, it would be a mighty hard blow to Uncle Billy, but of course a man from Maine couldn't do anything like that. I ain't sayin' but what General Wheeler is a pretty fair kind of a commander, as you Johnnies go, but it don't seem to me that he grasps the situation the same as I should."

"What would you do, Uncle Rube, if you had command of this force?" I asked, observing that the colonel was enjoying the interview.

"Wa'al, I wouldn't like to say offhand, 'cause this 'ere war business needs a heap of thinkin' about, but give me time, an' I'd lay out a campaign that would set the Confederacy right on their feet, if, as I said, I wasn't helpin' run the other side. Takin' you an' Sam Waters as specimens of Johnnies, an' you're right decent people, a good deal more likely than I expected to see when I enlisted. After we get you trimmed right down inter shape so's you'll be willin' to say you've had enough, I'm allowin' that we'll all hands get on comfortable together, though of course you've got to give up your negroes, because this 'ere war has knocked the spots out of slavery—there's no gainsayin' that. But, Bob, how about a little stomach fillin'? I haven't had a bite since early mornin'."

"What did you have then, Uncle Rube?"

"Nothin' to speak of, lad. Perhaps four or five roasted eggs, half a chicken an' a few sweet potatoes —jest what you might call a snack to take the edge off a man's appetite till breakfast time."

"How would toasted bacon an' hardtack go?"

"With plenty of coffee?"

"Well, I'm sorry to say that the commissaries are not givin' us much coffee on this march. Just plain food like bacon an' hardtack."

"An' mostly nothin' else, I reckon," Uncle Rube said with a grin.

"Well, that's about it, but you're welcome to what we've got."

"Of course I am, Bob; of course I am. Don't you reckon I knew that, else why would I have been callin' out for Lieutenant Yardley ever since the Johnnies got hold of me?"

The colonel moved away, as if satisfied that the cream of the entertainment had been skimmed, and I led the old man to where we had established our phantom camp.

"Now tell me how you've fixed it with the old man Wheeler?" Uncle Rube asked, throwing himself down on the ground as if feeling perfectly at home and contented with all the surroundings.

I repeated to him the most important details of the interview with the commander, particularly that portion where his parole was to be binding until we arrived in the city of Savannah, and he turned the matter over silently in his mind a few moments, after which he said:

"Well, now look here, Bob, I ain't quite certain of my ground in this 'ere matter. I'm on parole till we get into the city of Savannah, eh?"

"That's it. And then comes the question as to whether you will renew it."

"But s'sposin' we don't strike Savannah? Allowin' Uncle Billy gobbles this whole concern up, an' we never see the city, where am I then? Why, I'm beholden to you Johnnies, an' bound to be one of you

till I can go to Savannah. An' s'posin' the war was ended right up quick, with all hands of us sent to Maine, then I'd have to go to the expense of travelin' way down here before I'd be fixed right."

I explained to the old man that in the event of capture while he acted the part of a non-combatant, his parole would have expired, but it required a good many words before he was convinced that I had stated the case truthfully.

Sam's efforts as cook did not meet with Uncle Rube's approval, and immediately we had settled the matter of the parole, he insisted upon toasting the bacon himself. He sent Sam around among the troopers to borrow a frying-pan, declaring that he would make us a pudding of hardtack such as had kept his "detachment" in good health and the best of spirits during the most painful of their military experiences.

I knew full well that Uncle Rube was considered by his comrades an artist in the culinary line, and was more than willing he should display his ability, promising myself meanwhile that if he concocted any mess which did not appeal favorably to my stomach I would reject it on the plea of having already eaten as much as I desired.

Sam had some difficulty in procuring the desired implement, but he finally succeeded, and when our prisoner was engaged in mixing crumbs of hardtack and bacon fat, the latter in most generous proportions, Waters asked if General Wheeler had given permission for him to accompany me to Savannah.

I explained why nothing had been said regarding that portion of the business and advised him to go at once for the necessary permission.

"Do you think he will allow it?" he asked anxiously.

"Well, to tell the truth, Sam, I'm afraid he won't. There's no good reason why you should be allowed to leave this division, where you are needed, simply because it is your pleasure to go with me."

"But I could do as good service in Savannah as here," he interrupted in a pleading tone, as if the decision rested wholly with me.

"I grant you that, Sam, but General Wheeler will say to himself that he is in more need of men than General Hardee can be, who is not at present threatened by the enemy. Every effort is being made to get together enough of our people to oppose Sherman, an' if you are allowed to leave, why should not twenty others be granted the same privilege?"

"Because you don't want twenty to go with you," Sam replied doggedly.

"But I am not the only person in the Confederacy who might have a favor to ask. If there is anything I can say in favor of the proposition, you may rely upon the words bein' spoken, but certain it is that you are the one who must make the application."

"At the same time you don't believe I will get the furlough?"

"Frankly, I do not, an' I am sorry, for nothin' would please me better than that you an' I should remain together."

"Then that settles it; I'm goin'!"

"Not without permission?" I cried.

"That is just what I'm countin' on doin'."

"Do you mean to say that you won't speak with the general regardin' what you want?"

"I would be a fool if I did, because supposin' I asked him an' he said 'no,' then it would be harder work to get away. As it is, I will hold my tongue an' go."

"But, man dear, that is desertion!"

"I don't see it in just that light, when I'm countin' on still doin' military service in the Confederate Army. It is only a change of commanders."

"It wouldn't be counted in that way if you were arrested and tried as a deserter."

"Now, look here, lieutenant, I'm of the opinion that there won't be much arrestin' done by our generals from this out. I believe, an' so do you, that this 'ere war is mighty near an end, an' if it so chances Sherman captures Savannah it will be good-by to us."

"But he won't capture it."

"So we all said about Vicksburg, but yet Grant walked in there on a Fourth of July mornin'."

"He's got the rights of the matter, Bob," Uncle Rube said as he looked up from his "pudding" of hardtack and crumbs. "You are about petered out already, an' Sherman's goin' into Savannah, if it so be he turns his nose that way, jest as true as I'm settin' here."

"You don't know anything about the defences of the place, Uncle Rube," I said almost sharply. "To begin with, he would be forced to capture Fort McAllister, one of the best fortified works in the country, and fully manned. A hundred thousand men could not take it, save by regular siege, an' I question if even that number could shut it off from communication with Savannah."

"I'll have to say to you the same as Sam does. Look at Vicksburg. Where will you find a better fortified place than that? But yet when we got ready we went in."

"That is a different affair. You besieged the

city, an' it was possible to cut it off from the rest of the country."

"But, in the first place, before our steamboats run past the batteries, you would have said that we couldn't hold possession of the river, yet we did. You'll find it the same with Fort McAllister. Uncle Billy will snoop' round it if he thinks it ain't worth spendin' time over, but 'cordin' to my belief he'll go up an' walk right in."

"Then you would advise Sam to desert simply in order that he an' I may be taken by Sherman's army?"

"I don't know as I've said anythin' that you might call advice, but it strikes me if he wants to go where he's bound to be captured, he's got the right to do it. I wouldn't be afraid to bet as many big doughnuts as Sarah Ann could fry in a day that he'll be a prisoner to us Yankees before General Wheeler gets a chance to claim that he deserted."

Now all this reasoning, or argument, or whatever you choose to call it, was exactly in line with Sam's belief, consequently he was strengthened in his determination by the old man's words, and I held my peace, realizing that it would be useless to make further protest, but at the same time feeling convinced that it was a most unwise move, one which might lead us into serious difficulties, particularly in case General Sherman did not succeed in his purpose.

Therefore it was that I said gravely to Sam:

"I shall be glad to have you go with me, lad, but remember that you must take all the responsibilities of the step. Desertin' in face of the enemy, even with the claim that you counted on servin' in a different army, is an ugly matter."

"I will take the chances," Sam replied doggedly,

and by that time Uncle Rube had made ready his alleged pudding, a specimen of the cook's skill which tasted decidedly better than it looked.

When the meal was near an end, and I must say that I have eaten more unsavory things than hard-tack swimming in bacon fat, came the question of when and how we should set out on our journey. It behooved us to settle the matter quickly, because we knew that General Wheeler's division would not remain inactive many hours, and it would be decidedly dangerous for Sam and me if we were left in the rear when the next movement was made.

We had two horses for three men, and although Uncle Rube declared his willingness to walk, I was not satisfied that we should be forced to move thus slowly, for it was in my mind that General McLaw would not be able long to hold his position at Ogeechee Church, and if I counted on entering Savannah it must be within a reasonably short time, else we might find the city regularly invested.

Sam deliberately proposed to steal a horse for our prisoner to ride, but as a matter of course I refused to listen to any such suggestion, casting about in my mind for some locality nearby where we might confiscate one from a planter, an act not strictly honest in view of the orders emanating from the War Department, but warranted, according to my belief, by the exigencies of the case.

"What kind of a beast is that over yonder?" Uncle Rube suddenly asked, pointing far away in the distance, and a single glance was sufficient to show that it was a horse, probably one which had been condemned as useless by some of our troopers or strayed from the army.

"See what it is, Sam. I don't fancy it is any very

valuable animal, but you may as well have a look at it."

Sam set off at full speed, lest some one else get ahead of him, and while he was gone Uncle Rube gave me what he probably considered an entertaining exposition of military law regarding desertion, in which there was little truth and a very decided leaning toward the opinion he had already expressed.

Sam returned with a sorry-looking animal, bearing every evidence of having remained so long in the service as to have been discharged because of being unfit for further duty, and said as he turned the decrepit steed loose near our own horses:

"He isn't anything nice to look at, an' I reckon he's worse to ride, but take it all in all he'll be better than nothin'. If you won't agree to stealin' somethin' decent, why, this is better'n settin' off on foot, an' if it should come to a case of makin' speed, we would be just as well off, an' no worse, as if the Yankee was forced to walk."

"We'll keep him," I said without further reflection, for I believed as Sam had said, that he would be better than nothing, and we might possibly exchange him on the road. At all events, the chances of confiscating a horse would still remain the same.

Then came the question of saddle and bridle, and this matter Sam took upon himself, discharging the duty so faithfully that in less than twenty minutes the desired articles were lying on the ground near our camp-fire, while I dared not ask concerning them, lest he inform me that they were not come by honestly.

Now there remained nothing to be settled save when we should set off, and that I decided without discussion.

"We will go at once, following down the southerly side of the creek, a course which surely should keep us at a safe distance from either force."

"But what about grub?" Sam asked.

"We must take our chances as to that. It will be better we go hungry for a time than to fall into the hands of the Federals."

At the moment I failed to realize that we might be in even more serious difficulties if we encountered our own people, and it was this oversight of mine which finally led us into trouble.

There was no one to bid us "Godspeed" when we made ready for our departure, nor did I care for leave-taking, since Sam was my only acquaintance in the division, and he, I believed, would be stopped before we had left the line of the encampment, but, as it appeared, he had already laid his plans.

"You are to keep straight on down the creek, eh?" he said when I helped into the saddle Uncle Rube, who was an awkward soldier on an awkward steed.

"Of course, that is the plan. Have you any different proposition to make?"

"No, I was simply wantin' to know where I could find you, that's all. Take care of yourselves!" he added in a louder tone. "I'll see you again before this cruel war is over."

With this he leaped into the saddle and rode westward in the direction from which the division had just come, leaving me staring after him in perplexity until Uncle Rube said with a chuckle of satisfaction:

"There's nothin' slow about that Johnnie, even if he did borrow good money an' pay it back in shinplasters!"

"What do you mean?" I asked, turning upon him in surprise.

"Nothin' much, except that he won't be stopped while he's ridin' on that road, an' with such a hoss as is under him it's a case of his comin' up with us wherever he pleases. What you call 'desertion' has been worked out in fairly good shape, though I'm free to confess he'd better keep a good distance ahead of this 'ere division in the future."

I had been thick-headed not to understand Sam's purpose in thus taking leave of us, and without further delay I leaped into the saddle, calling upon Uncle Rube to follow me at as good a pace as it was possible for him to coax from his steed.

CHAPTER IX

SUSPICIONS

From what had been learned regarding the enemy, I believed that we might reach Fort McAllister without taking many chances of being taken, provided we did not deviate from the most direct southerly course.

It was not in my mind to return to Ogeechee Church, and for two reasons: First, I was eager to be with my own regiment, and, secondly, because it did not seem to me that I might be of any benefit there. I was not then minded, nor am I now, to set myself up as a military critic, yet I believed that General McLaw could not hold the position he had chosen, unless heavily reinforced, and where help would come from immediately I was unable to guess.

Not until we were five miles or more from where General Wheeler's troopers had halted did Sam

Waters come within our range of vision, and then it was Uncle Rube who called my attention to three horsemen in the distance, saying as he did so:

"I'm allowin' that our Johnnie didn't get through as slick as he counted on, for it looks to me as if a couple of graybacks had an idee of overhaulin' him."

When it was possible for me to see that to which the old man referred I understood all the possibilities of danger which might be descending upon us at the very moment when it had seemed as if the most disagreeable portion of the journey to Savannah had been accomplished.

Considerably more than a mile away I could see Sam riding close to his horse's neck, with two mounted men at his heels, and the little puffs of white smoke which arose now and then told that the fellow was under fire.

"Some one has suspected what he would do and sent a couple of troopers in pursuit," I said half to myself, and Uncle Rube replied, as if thinking an answer necessary:

"It'll take more'n two to stop him, unless I'm 'way off in my judgment of what he can do."

"He's bound to surrender!" I cried impatiently. "Sam Waters has got enough common sense to prevent him from opening fire on our own people, even though he *has* made an attempt to desert."

"He ain't showin' it to any great extent just now," the old Yankee said with a grin, almost before I ceased speaking, and to my horror I saw that Sam had opened fire on his own account.

Turning in the saddle, he fired four or five shots without doing any execution, so far as I could see, and then gave all his attention to the horse once more.

My heart sank within me, for I knew full well that

if Waters was captured by troopers from General Wheeler's division or if the men came to understand that he was trying to join me I might find myself in more serious difficulty than on that day in Vicksburg, when it was known I had assisted a Yankee lad.

Sam was within less than half a mile of where Uncle Rube and I stood anxiously watching the outcome of the chase, for it seemed as if the old man understood full well how we might be drawn into the affair, when his horse stumbled, throwing him to the ground.

In a twinkling the troopers were upon him, and then, to my dismay, he stood his ground. It was to be a duel, with two against one, and yet I dared not raise a hand.

"Are we to stand here an' see him downed?" Uncle Rube asked sharply, and I replied in a tone of irritation:

"Can't you see that it is my duty to aid the troopers, rather than Sam? If they have been ordered to arrest him, I cannot interfere, unless I'm willing to have it said I am a mutineer."

"Then don't interfere with me!" the old man said quickly, and before I fully understood the meaning of his words, he had pulled my sword from its scabbard and was riding at full speed toward Sam.

Between my prisoner and my friend I was in a fair way of being disgraced as a Southern man and cashiered as an officer in the Confederate service, but yet I sat in the saddle motionless, taking sides with neither party.

Sam was on foot, facing the two men who rode around him, seeking to get in a shot or blow which would be effective, and he withheld his fire, as if counting to make the first shot tell.

Understanding what was his determination, my scattered wits returned to me on the instant. He must be prevented from committing murder, for such it would be called if he killed those who were in pursuance of their duty, and I spurred my horse forward.

"Hold your hand, Sam!" I cried warningly. "You must not resist those who have authority to arrest you!"

"Authority be blowed!" Sam cried angrily. "These are a couple of bushwhackers who are trying to steal my horse so they can mount the third villain, who is lying back there among the cottonwoods, wounded!"

Not until he spoke did I give particular heed to the fellows, and then a single glance was sufficient to show that Sam had told no more than the truth. Now I could give him the aid he needed, and, drawing my revolver, I rode at full speed toward the nearest.

He turned to meet me, showing that a hand-to-hand fight was not unwelcome, and if any proof of his being a bushwhacker had been needed, his willingness to attack an officer would have been sufficient.

Now it was that I realized how sadly at a disadvantage Uncle Rube had placed me by taking my sword, for it was necessary I should depend entirely on my revolver, which is not a convenient weapon in such a struggle as I believed to be before me.

Twice I fired with what seemed to be fairly good aim, but with no other success than to cut a deep furrow across one cheek, and he all the while trying to close in on me, thus making it apparent that he no longer had any ammunition.

His horse was a good one, and, manœuver as I

might, it was impossible to get so near as to make absolutely certain of lodging a bullet where it belonged. I was on the point of wheeling about to get my sword when the old Yankee suddenly appeared, circling to the left as if counting on getting behind my enemy when next I made the opportunity.

While I was thus engaged, Sam Waters was having all the exercise he needed with the other bushwhacker, clinging to the bridle of the latter's horse as he thrust and parried desperately, but in such a manner as told me plainly that unless Uncle Rube or I could soon lend him some aid, he must be worsted.

It was our prisoner who put an end to the battle where the odds were in our favor and yet fortune against us.

I fired at the bushwhacker's head, spurring my horse toward his in such a manner that he was forced to pull his steed sharply around in order to avoid the shock, and at that instant Uncle Rube, leaping from the saddle actively as a cat, struck the fellow a blow on the bridle-arm, which must have opened the flesh to the bone.

Frantic with pain, unable longer to guide his steed and at the same time continue the battle, the fellow struck his spurs into the horse's sides the full length of the rowels, causing the animal to start off at a mad gallop in the direction from which he had just come.

There was no good reason why we should pursue the scoundrel, and we would have given our attention to aiding Sam Waters, had not his adversary suddenly struck out to follow his comrade, giving us a victory in which was little or no credit, for it would have been hard lines when three honest soldiers could not put an end to a couple of scurvy bushwhackers.

Sam did not stop to ask or answer questions, but

ran at full speed after his horse, which was munching the rich grass a short distance away, and not until he rode up did we learn how he chanced to come upon the villains who had so nearly put an end to his scheme of making a change of commanders without due authority.

"They were hidin' among the cottonwoods as if waitin' for somebody like me to come along," the trooper said in reply to my question after all three were mounted once more. "They came out like spiders from a web when a fly heaves in sight, an' I saw one among the trees who looked as if he was wounded. First off I thought they were soldiers who had been sent to take me back to the brigade, but when one of 'em yelled for me to dismount an' I might go where I pleased, it popped into my head as to what they were. I reckon we can set it down as a fact that I've left the cavalry service for good an' all."

"That remains to be seen, Sam," I said, a premonition of evil coming into my heart when his desertion was thus shown to be an accomplished fact. "We didn't ask ourselves what would be the result when you got into Savannah an' reported, as you must do."

"I reckon they'll be glad enough to get a new recruit without askin' too many questions."

"That isn't a reasonable supposition, Sam. The moment it comes to the ears of the officers that you ran away from General Wheeler, I'm afraid orders will be given immediately for your arrest, an' then will follow a court-martial, which can have but one endin', for if ever a man deserted in the face of the enemy, you are that one."

It was impossible to convince Sam that he had

done anything particularly wrong. The fact that he stood ready to perform military service in some other branch was, in his mind, a sufficient excuse for anything he had done, and nothing that I could say shook such belief.

It was a waste of time to talk of the possibilities of the future. We might never succeed in reaching Savannah because of being taken prisoners or killed on the way, therefore it was much like a useless expenditure of breath to argue about something which would not be encountered.

Because of the condition of Uncle Rube's horse we were forced to make frequent halts, and shortly before sunset I proposed that we camp for a couple of hours, continuing the journey throughout the night.

This met with the approval of my companions, and then it was that I learned how much my superior, as a soldier, Sam Waters was. I had set out on the journey without heed to a sufficient supply of provisions, whereas he had drawn as many rations as the commissaries would issue, and in addition had either bought or stolen a considerable store of bacon from his comrades.

Therefore it was that we had the wherewithal for a supper, although not of the quality that satisfied Uncle Rube's pampered appetite, and to me, who had not grown accustomed to such fare as the invading Yankees were revelling in, it was a tempting meal, but brought to a conclusion much more quickly than was pleasing.

We had hardly more than made ready for eating when in the distance, and coming from the northward, was what looked to be a full regiment of cavalry.

Uncle Rube sprang to his feet, exhibiting more

alarm than did Sam Waters or I, as he cried impatiently:

"I'm jiggered if we ain't goin' to be captured over agin, an' instead of havin' a little side excursion down to Savannah, I've got to go back an' take charge of the 46th!"

Because of the fact that the horsemen were coming from the north, I had no question but that they were Yankees, and immediately cast about in my mind as to whether it would be better to make Sam's horse carry double or trust to the chances of escape at such speed as could be maintained by Uncle Rube's steed.

"What do you think of it?" I asked of Sam as I hurriedly saddled the mare, and he replied without turning his face from the advancing strangers:

"I reckon we'd better hold on a spell. They don't look like Yankees, an' I'm allowin' that we'll soon be among friends."

As he spoke I gazed more intently upon the troop, and then it was possible to make out the uniforms.

Within a few seconds I became convinced that it was a regiment of our people, and whether a portion of General Wheeler's force or not, was of little consequence. We were in no danger of being made prisoners.

Uncle Rube was greatly relieved in mind when I announced that there was no necessity for flight, and I really believe he would have considered it a grave misfortune had he been released before having had an opportunity to visit Savannah.

We were quietly eating supper when the foremost of the troopers came up, and not until an officer approached did I consider it necessary to rise to my feet.

Then, or very shortly afterward, and much to my

surprise, I understood how culpable we had been in leaving General Wheeler without some token from him that we had the right to be thus separated from his command.

The officer who first appeared on the scene was a captain, and as I saluted he asked with more gruffness in his tone than seemed to me necessary:

"Is this a scouting party?"

"No, sir," I replied. "We left General Wheeler's command this noon, on our way to Savannah, where I am to rejoin my regiment after having been in the hospital at Milledgeville."

"And who is this?" he asked, pointing to Uncle Rube.

I explained at as much length as I thought necessary, for the curtness displayed by the captain caused me to be rather stiff in manner.

"And General Wheeler was willing a Yankee should move about at will within our lines while the enemy is advancing so rapidly?" the captain asked with a curious inflection of his voice.

"He is under parole, sir."

"And what is to prevent his breaking the parole, once having gained the information which his commander desires?"

This was the same as asserting that Uncle Rube was a spy, and we aiding him in his work. Therefore I said angrily:

"If General Wheeler was satisfied that this man might be trusted, surely it is not for you to question."

"Perhaps not," and now he spoke in a yet more angry tone than I had employed. "Of course it is not for me to doubt a stranger's word, when that stranger declares himself to be a member of the Southern Army, yet at the same time, in as serious

a game as war, it is to be supposed you have a pass from your commander."

Not until that moment did I realize that I should have asked for something to prove the truth of the statements I might be called upon to make, and the dismay which came into my heart must have been perceptible on my face, for the captain cried sharply:

"Then you have neither permit nor order from General Wheeler?"

There was little need for me to make reply, and while I stood there confused, groping about in my mind for words with which to answer the accusation so plainly expressed, the captain called four men to stand guard over us, while he rode back a short distance to where the regimental officers had halted.

"Look here, lad," Uncle Rube said to me confidentially. "Do you reckon that 'ere popinjay has an idee I'm only a make-believe prisoner?"

"It begins to look that way, since we're under guard," I replied irritably.

"Then let him turn me loose, givin' back the parole you asked for, an' I'll soon show him what's what."

"That would be no proof, man dear. He evidently claims that you have come into our hands as a prisoner simply to serve some purpose of General Sherman's, an' we—Sam Waters and I—are helpin' you in the work of a spy."

At that instant another thought occurred to me, bringing with it quite as much of trouble as the accusation against Uncle Rube.

Once the colonel of the regiment set about examining us, the question would come up, even though the statement that I was on the way to rejoin my regiment should not be doubted, as to what right Sam

Waters had in my company, and straightway he would be taken in custody as a deserter.

Verily I had proven myself the poorest apology for a soldier, and the most careless of men, to have come away from the division with neither pass nor safeguard, nor anything to prove the facts in the case.

Involuntarily I groaned in agony of spirit, for it seemed as if we were in a far worse plight among our own people than if the Yankees had captured us.

Sam Waters was somewhat cast down by this check to our plans, but yet it was evident he failed of seeing all the dangers and possibilities, for he said cheerily:

"The worst they can do is to hold us a spell, because it ain't any killin' case, until you've had a chance to prove the truth of your story."

"No, Sam, not so far as Uncle Rube an' I are concerned, but suppose we are taken back to General Wheeler, what about you?"

"Jeemimy! I never thought of that part of it. Why, say, lieutenant, it does kinder look as if we were in a snarl, eh?"

"Snarl!" I repeated angrily. "It's worse than that, an' all because of my stupidity. Whoever heard of a lieutenant so thick-headed as to suppose he might make his way with a prisoner an' a deserter across what is virtually a battlefield, without anything save his own word to prove that he is actin' in good faith? I am not fit to be a private soldier, let alone an officer, an' whatsoever of trouble may come to me personally is deserved, because of my showin' such lack of good sense."

"Now, don't get riled, lad, don't get riled!" Uncle Rube said in what he intended should be a soothing tone, but it grated on my nerves woefully. *"I*

haven't said anything yet about this 'ere matter, an' when I do that smart captain will begin to find out he's barkin' up the wrong tree."

"Unless I am mistaken, the less you say just now the better, for your plight is a serious one. They will accuse you of allowin' yourself to be made a prisoner that you might act the spy, an' I have done what I could to help strengthen that accusation."

"If I can stand it, I reckon you can, lad. These 'ere Johnnies will think twice before they jump very hard on a man from Maine who has got the record I have in the army. Why, Uncle Billy would chew 'em all up if they did anything to me!"

"How far would that go toward helpin' you out?" Sam Waters asked. "Your Uncle Billy might chew Johnnies till the day of his death, an' never ease up on you a bit, after your neck was stretched."

"Now you're talkin' foolish," the old man said reprovingly. "Leave me to run this thing, an' you'll find that one regiment of cavalry ain't enough to bring us up with a sharp turn."

It was useless to make any effort at persuading the old man that his wisest plan was to hold his tongue, and in fact, after all that had happened, my advice could be of but little value.

We were not kept long in suspense as to what might be the purpose of these troopers.

An orderly came up, spoke with the guards in a low tone, and we were ordered to march, our faces being turned in the direction of the regimental staff.

Now was come the time when we were to be examined by those who probably were already prejudiced against us, and I trembled inwardly, having lost all confidence in my own story, so improbable did it seem when I gave it words.

There was but one ray of light before me. If it so chanced I met any in this force who knew me, then might the way be made plain after a certain fashion, although I question whether a friend, however near, would vouch for Uncle Rube and Sam Waters.

It was the colonel himself who asked for an explanation of our being in that place without written permission from the general commanding, and I begged that he allow me to tell the entire story, explaining that I had but just begun to realize how flimsy it seemed when taken by itself, yet if everything was known regarding my movements since having left the hospital, matters might appear in a different light.

He was a reasonable man, not unkind and yet not disposed to show any leaning in my favor, but the desired permission was given, and I began by telling of my going into the hospital, of being discharged from there that I might spend a certain time on General Cobb's plantation, and from that down to the present moment, relating every detail, save so far as Sam Waters' desertion was concerned, until I had come to an end.

"Yet you claim General Wheeler allowed you to go to Savannah, and that you, a young man who has served nearly two years in the army, knowing that you were to cross a theater of probable action, failed to realize that written authority of some kind might be necessary in your case?" the colonel asked sternly.

"As I have told you, sir, we came from near Sandersville to Ogeechee Church with messages from the commander, and at that time did not think a written statement essential to our safety. A paper of any kind on my person written by General Wheeler

would have shown, in event of being captured, that I had lately come from his command."

"Very true, lieutenant," the colonel replied. "When you were acting as messenger that was a precaution which should have been taken lest it be suspected you carried something of military importance, but whether a safeguard from him was found on you or not, your uniform proclaims you to be a Confederate soldier, and therefore you would be in no more danger of capture, in case the Yankees came up, than you are without it."

"But, colonel," I pleaded, "it can be proven readily at Ogeechee Church that Sam Waters an' I did carry a message from General Wheeler to General McLaw and return with the reply."

"True, that can be shown when we are at Ogeechee, but it will not relieve him whom you claim as a paroled prisoner from being suspected of spying. It is not my purpose to thresh out this matter here. You will accompany us under guard to General McLaw, and if he vouches for as much of your story as it is claimed he can, communication shall be had with General Wheeler. Captain," he added, turning to the officer who had first questioned us, "see that a strong guard be kept over these prisoners, and let the men be instructed to shoot with intent to kill at the first movement toward escape."

With this the colonel turned away, and I fancied that there was an expression of satisfaction upon the captain's face when he gave the order for us to be taken back to the point from which we had just come.

At all events, he did not treat me with that courtesy which I would have extended to one who claimed to be in my position while not yet proven guilty, and I mentally promised myself that if the opportunity

ever occurred, the stiff-necked officer should be taught such a lesson as could not soon be forgotten.

Six men were stationed as guard over us three while the regiment remained halted for supper, and Uncle Rube whispered in my ear, as if the fact gave him most intense satisfaction:

"Say, lad, it makes a man feel mighty good when these 'ere Johnnies are so careful of him. Two soldiers to look after each of us! It must be that the colonel has heard of me, an' most likely four of the guards are for my benefit, he knowin' that the other two can take of you an' Sam Waters."

It was well the old man could extract some pleasure from the situation, but I was unable to do so, unless having turned so selfish that it made no difference to me what might be the fate of my comrades.

General Wheeler would soon set my affairs straight and nothing very serious could come to me until he had been informed of the situation, but what about Uncle Rube and Sam Waters?

Verily they were in deep water!

CHAPTER X

OGEECHEE CHURCH

THERE was to my mind so much of danger for us in the future that I had little or no care regarding the probable movements of the regiment in which we were held prisoners, but Sam Waters, whose situation I deemed so dangerous, had the liveliest curiosity concerning the immediate action of our captors and satisfied it by questioning the guard.

At first the men were not inclined to fraternize with him, but on recalling to mind certain actions in which they as well as he had taken part, and referring to mutual friends, they became convinced he was indeed all he represented himself to be, and straightway became very friendly.

Through them Sam learned that this regiment had come from Mount Vernon, summoned in hot haste by General McLaw to assist him in checking the enemy at Ogeechee Church, and all believed that a serious battle would be fought at that place.

Observing that Sam was making acquaintances, I watched him and the guard narrowly, until learning that the latter were willing to accept us two as being bona fide Confederate soldiers who had told no more than the truth regarding their movements, but were decidedly skeptical as to the innocence of Uncle Rube.

As to the officers, they evidently believed he had assisted in his own capture in order to play the spy, but whether such line of reasoning was carried so far as to explain how we might be aiding him I could not learn.

I said to myself when this unimportant information had been gained that if the privates of the regiment could not believe our story, even after having satisfied themselves that at least one of the party was all he claimed to be, then how might we hope that those who held our fate in their hands would be more credulous?

Uncle Rube was apparently enjoying himself to the utmost extent. The soldiers who guarded us were quite willing to talk with him on indifferent subjects, and most likely found a deal of amusement in his criticisms and predictions, but yet they were

careful that he did not have the shadow of a chance to give them the slip.

That none of the officers of the regiment came to offer their services, or even to speak with me, caused more bitterness of heart than I can well describe. I had never believed Southern soldiers could be so bigoted in their own belief, which was founded only on suspicion, or so ungenerous to a fellow officer in distress.

The name of Yardley was by no means an obscure one in Georgia, and the part which my kin were taking in the war was not slight. Therefore, whatever my own shortcomings might have been, because of those who were related to me by blood, should more than ordinary courtesy have been shown.

However, it is not necessary I should set down here all the bitter thoughts which came into my mind, nor is it needed for me to intimate that my faith in the strength of the ties which should have bound us of the South together firmly was beginning to be shaken. It is sufficient to say that I passed a very bad hour, and then was come the time to move.

The line of march was by fours, and we three prisoners were separated, each of us riding between two men. Because Uncle Rube was so poverty-stricken in regard to horse flesh, he was mounted on one of the spare animals belonging to an officer, I believe, and, as I heard him say to the troopers who rode beside him, it was almost worth being captured over again for the sake of making such "a good swap in beasts."

No halt was made during this last portion of the march until we were arrived at Ogeechee Church, and then I believed our condition would be bettered because of my having an interview with General McLaw, but for some reason our captors did not deem it

necessary to make report concerning us immediately after the arrival, and we were herded like sheep into a small shed where were already half a dozen horses. Therefore it can well be fancied that the situation was not such as warranted our gaining any very sweet repose.

"It's true that I'm green at bein' a prisoner," Uncle Rube said when the doors of the shed were shut and we knew that the rude building was guarded by a squad of men, "but it strikes me that this 'ere way of treatin' human bein's ain't in strict accord with what you Johnnies profess. I've hearn tell that you call yourselves 'Southern chivalry,' an' if I get the grip of that 'ere word, this chuckin' three men into a shed with a lot of hosses, where there's a chance of bein' kicked to death before mornin', don't quite come up to the mark."

"It's simply an act of brutality, Uncle Rube, that's what it is!" I cried indignantly. "The officer who gave the orders for us to be thus confined shall suffer for it if I live long enough!"

"Now don't get riled, lad; don't get riled. I'll answer for it he'll suffer, seein's how Uncle Billy is pretty nigh up with us, but at the same time I'm willin' to admit that I would like to have one whack at him on my own account."

"Anybody would think we was Yankees by the way they chuck us 'round," Sam Waters cried indignantly, and Uncle Rube, ever unmindful of the danger in our situation, immediately took exception to the remark.

"So you think any kind of abuse is good enough for a Northern man, eh? Wa'al, you oughter go down into Maine once, an' if they knew you was the worst rebel this side of Charleston, they'd give you a

better show than we're gettin' here. I can't make out where you people got your idee of Yankees, unless it was in a circus where they had a wild man of Borneo, or somethin' of that kind, an' labeled him from Boston. I have yet to see down this way as many all 'round decent people in a crowd of a hundred as I can find any day in the State of Maine."

"Now it's you who are gettin' riled, Uncle Rube," I said, interfering lest my comrades fall to quarreling among themselves when, if ever in our lives, we needed to stand closely together. "Sam didn't mean that the Yankees were not deserving of better treatment, but our people unfortunately take less care of their prisoners than do you of the North because they lack the facilities, and now we are treated as if our guilt was made plain. But it will be changed as soon as I have an interview with General McLaw."

"You'd better leave that part of it to me, lad," Uncle Rube said quickly, forgetting the anger caused by Sam's remark. "I'd like to give some of these Johnnies a right good piece of my mind, an' I'll do it, too, before we leave this place. Whereabouts in the town is the church, do you know?"

"We are not in such a town as you are accustomed to seein', Uncle Rube. This is a settlement of not above five or six houses, an' the church is the only buildin' of any consequence. I'm not exactly certain, but my impression is that this shed is immediately in the rear of it, an' the earthworks which Sam an' I have seen are thrown up on either side of the road, perhaps fifty yards from here."

I fancied that by this time Sam was beginning to realize somewhat of the position in which he had placed himself, for immediately I had spoken of the interview with the commander, he relapsed into

silence, and I heard him moving around among the horses as if it was his desire to be by himself.

How the remainder of that long night was passed I cannot well say. Now and then Uncle Rube and I talked of his "detachment," he wondering how Dick Studley and Job Lord or Steve Stubbs were contriving to exist without him to have a general oversight upon them, and I speculating on the possibilities that General Sherman might fall upon us suddenly before we had had time to make any effort toward extricating ourselves from the dangers by which we were surrounded.

"In that case, lad, we would be all right," Uncle Rube said contentedly as I gave words to my thoughts. "You an' Sam would be prisoners in our hands, an' from what you know of that kind of business, there's many a worse plight in the army."

"True for you, Uncle Rube, but suppose General McLaw decides upon a retreat?"

"Wa'al, what then? I reckon we'll have to go with him, that's all."

Surely ignorance was bliss in his case, but there were times when it seemed as if my heart actually stopped beating, as I understood, or thought I did, that in case of a retreat short shrift would be given one who was believed to be a spy.

Well, morning dawned at last, as all mornings will throughout time, whether they usher in joy or sorrow, and the troopers came to care for the horses, grooming them carefully and feeding liberally, but giving no heed to us save by making certain that we did not escape.

Not until nearly two hours had elapsed was any heed apparently paid to us, and then an orderly came

to the shed demanding to know which of the prisoners was Robert Yardley.

"I am he," was my reply, "and for the first time in my life do I feel ashamed of being a Southerner."

"That is not very temperate language for one in your situation," the orderly said sharply, and I replied with yet greater heat:

"Look at this place in which I was thrust last night, after having ridden between General Wheeler's force and here on messenger service, an' then say if a decent man would not be ashamed of claiming as comrades those who would so treat a human being!"

"The quarters are not comfortable, I am free to admit," and now the orderly drew in his horns a bit, "but you must remember that the circumstances are unusual and the facilities for taking care of prisoners exceedingly poor."

"Even so, an' yet there is no excuse, for we might have been left in the open, since there were a sufficient number of soldiers on duty outside to guard us, instead of thrustin' us in here as if we were cattle."

"You are ordered to headquarters," the man said, unable to make any reasonable reply to my words.

"I alone?"

"Yes. General McLaw will say if you are the messenger who came to him."

"There is another who accompanied me."

"You are the only one whom I am instructed to summon."

Holding myself stiffly, as one should who had the same cause for complaint, I followed the orderly in silence until we were come to the commander's quarters, and there I stood at attention until he was pleased to look my way.

"Good morning, lieutenant," he said in a kindly

tone. "I am distressed because of not having been informed last night concerning your arrival. You are charged with being a suspicious character, in the company of a supposed spy, and I can readily disprove the accusation. Can you tell me in which direction General Wheeler is probably moving to-day?"

"Without havin' asked the question, sir, I believe he counted on comin' here."

"Will you tell me all you can regarding this man who it is claimed may be a spy?"

"There is no reason for makin' any such claim against him, sir, an' if the colonel of the regiment who ordered my arrest had the instincts of a gentleman, he would never have questioned the word of a Confederate officer."

The language was intemperate, I will admit, and the words no sooner spoken than I regretted them, but General McLaw evidently made allowance for my righteous indignation and said in a most friendly tone:

"There are times, lieutenant, when it behooves all of us to be over-suspicious rather than over-credulous. I can well fancy that, under the circumstances, General Wheeler failed to think of the possibility that you might need some safeguard, and it seems no more than right that the colonel should have detained you there until he could learn from me the truth. One of your party is the same trooper who accompanied you when you came here before?"

"Yes, sir, an' the other an old Yankee who was taken prisoner by some of General Wheeler's command."

Then I told once more the story of my meeting with Uncle Rube and his "detachment," repeating my desire to repay the debt when I found him a pris-

oner in our hands, and, having come to an end, the commander said with a smile:

"Even though the story was more improbable, I should believe it because of its having been told by a Yardley. You must understand that it is an unusual thing to parole a private soldier and then admit him to one of our fortified places at a time when the enemy is close upon us in such overwhelming numbers, for a spy could do us a vast amount of injury. But as I have already said, I have every faith in the statement, and it is needless to say that you are no longer under arrest."

My heart beat high with joy, for at that moment it seemed as if all those dangers which I had pictured to myself were passing, and then in a twinkling my exultation was at an end, for the commander said carelessly:

"I would like to see your companions, lieutenant," and he told the orderly standing nearest to bring them to him.

Now was come the time, I believed, when Sam's desertion would be made public, and once General McLaw learned that I had willingly left the cavalry force in company with one who I knew was deserting his post of duty, his confidence in the honor of a Yardley would be sadly shaken.

I could make no protest, however, against his seeing my comrades, else suspicion would be at once aroused, and in fear and trembling I awaited the coming of Uncle Rube and Sam, while General McLaw transacted some business with those of his staff near at hand in order to economize time.

To my surprise the orderly returned with the old man only and involuntarily I cried:

"Where is Waters?"

"He must have been hurt by the horses during the night. We found him lying under the feet of the animal nearest the end of the shed, and he complains of severe internal injury," the orderly said, speaking to me in a low tone, but sufficiently loud for the general to hear.

I was astounded. Not ten minutes before having been summoned to headquarters Sam Waters was talking to me, and then in as able a bodily condition as a man could wish to be. The accident must have occurred immediately after I left, and I looked at Uncle Rube inquiringly, but he had no explanation to volunteer.

"Let the man have such attention as can be given him, and that speedily," General McLaw said, and then turning toward me, I introduced to him Corporal Reuben Smart from Maine.

The old man advanced with outstretched hand as if expecting the commander would be overjoyed at meeting so celebrated a personage and said loudly:

"I'm right glad to see you, general, right glad, though I did count on takin' a hand in turnin' you out of this 'ere position instead of hangin' 'round as a prisoner. How are you gettin' on an' how are all the folks?"

It would have been a stern man indeed who could have seen and heard Uncle Rube without some show of mirth, and I observed that General McLaw had no little difficulty in keeping his face "straight."

"The fact that you are a prisoner of war doesn't seem to affect your spirits, corporal," he said, using the remark as a pretext for laughing heartily, and Uncle Rube replied in a matter-of-fact tone:

"Wa'al, no, not to speak of, general. I'm countin'

on takin' a run down to Savannah with Bob an' hangin' on there till Uncle Billy comes along."

"To whom did you refer?"

"Uncle Billy—General Sherman. He kinder likes to have us call him 'uncle,' an' it comes nat'ral, don't you know."

"Are you expecting to stay long in Savannah, corporal?"

"Wa'al now, it might be a week or perhaps ten days before our folks get down there, but they're goin'. Bless your soul, they'll be there before I've had time to see half the city. Then agin, I reckon it will be considerable of a story to tell when I get back to Malden 'bout my swingin' 'round among the Johnnies, big as life, when I was under parole."

General McLaw's staff gathered more closely around the old man, evidently enjoying the scene, and once more I grew hopeful. If Sam's accident was so serious as to prevent him from appearing before the commander, then was there a possibility we might escape the dangers which at one time had threatened us so strongly, for no person, however prejudiced, could have talked with Uncle Rube a single moment and entertained any idea that he was fitted to play the spy, unless, peradventure, he was the most consummate actor that ever lived.

One and another of the staff had some question to ask in order to provoke him to criticism or quaint reply, and save for General McLaw's direct command our interview might have been prolonged until now, but he speedily aroused his officers to a sense of their duty by saying:

"Gentlemen, we cannot afford to thus spend the time, however entertaining the corporal from Malden may be," and to me he added: "Lieutenant, neither

you nor your companions are under arrest, I am happy to say. If, however, there is no urgent reason why you should arrive in Savannah immediately, I would ask that you remain here a few days, for we need every man that can be mustered."

This was a finale which I had not anticipated, and surely it seemed as if Sam Waters' accident would not benefit us in any way, because once General Wheeler's command came up he would be known as a deserter.

However, I could not well refuse the general's request, and hid as best I could my discomfiture by asking where I would be quartered.

"You may mess with my staff, lieutenant, but later I will assign you to some special duty."

Then he turned away, and I motioned Uncle Rube to follow me, for the old man failed to understand that the interview was at an end.

When we were outside the building, and where no one might overhear the words, I asked my companion:

"When was Sam Waters hurt by the horse?"

"Wa'al, I reckon it was about the time he was expectin' to be ordered up to headquarters. Say, that general of yours ain't any slouch, is he? A right nice kind of a man; real home-body, I'd call him. You'd never think he was a Johnnie, would you?"

"Look here, Uncle Rube, you need to keep a close tongue in your head, but try now to tell me all you know."

"Bless your soul, Bob, what is there for me to tell?"

"About Sam Waters. Was he really hurt?"

"Not much more'n a jar on his mind, I guess,

when he was afraid they would bring him up to ask why he left the troopers."

"But if he is shammin' the surgeons will soon discover it."

"Wa'al, lad, that's somethin' for him to 'tend to, an' don't let's bother our heads about it. What harm can there be in my talkin' 'bout your General McLaw? That's what I want to know. You cut me off as short as pie-crust."

"I intended simply to warn you, Uncle Rube, that we are in a tight fix yet. It's certain General Wheeler will come here, an' then will be known the fact that we rode away with Sam, knowin' all his purpose."

"But what does that amount to, Bob? We are all right. Got the run of the whole campaign, 'cordin' to what the general said. Why don't you let Sam paddle his own canoe? It looks to me as though he was able to do it."

"You are speakin' now, Uncle Rube, as if you would abandon a comrade when he is in trouble."

"Nonsense, lad; I ain't doin' anythin' of the kind. That 'ere Sam Waters is smarter than you an' I put together, an' I reckon he'll pull through all right, so why shouldn't we make the most of a good thing an' not worry our heads off?"

"Do you know where he is?"

"No, but I guess we can find him, if that's what you're after."

It was possible, so I realized, that I might display too much anxiety about the trooper, and therefore, instead of hunting him up as I should have done, I went to look after the mare, learning to my indignation that she was in charge of the negro who acted as servant to that captain who had first come upon us.

In fact, I had not a little difficulty in reclaiming her, the darkey refusing to give her up, declaring that his master had confiscated her.

"That is more of your Southern chivalry, Bob," Uncle Rube whispered in my ear and I replied angrily:

"I'll give them a specimen of Southern belligerency if this sort of thing is carried on much longer," and without further parley I took possession of the mare, determined to settle accounts with the captain as soon as I could find him conveniently.

We tethered the little animal nearby headquarters, and, leaving Uncle Rube in charge, lest some other officer might cast envious eyes upon her, I went in search of Sam Waters, wishing most heartily that I had never been so foolish as to have sanctioned his desertion.

CHAPTER XI

FALLING BACK

A FIELD-HOSPITAL had been established two or three hundred yards in the rear of the earthworks, as I was told by the soldiers of whom I had inquired my way, and there I went at once, questioning whether the deserter would dare present himself to a surgeon as one who had been injured, when he could have nothing to show in proof of his statement.

Much to my surprise, I found him sitting on the ground with his back against a tree, talking to one of the surgeons who wore a most serious expression of countenance, and I observed that from time to time the poor fellow was spitting blood.

My heart reproached me for having even entertained a suspicion that he was playing 'possum, for I could not but confess that he had the appearance of one in grievous pain, and surely there was no mistake as to the blood. Straightway there came into my mind the thought that I had been mistaken in Uncle Rube when believing him to be sympathetic, and I was almost angry because he had treated the matter so lightly as to give me the impression that Sam was playing a game for his own benefit.

"I was sorry to hear that you had been hurt, Sam, an' cannot understand even now how it came about. You were all right when I left the shed which our friends were so kind to turn into a prison for us at the same time they used it as a stable for the horses," I said, speaking thus ironically for the benefit of the surgeon, who was a gentlemanly looking sort of fellow by the way.

"It was not until after you had gone, sir, that the horse nearest the end of the shed managed to unfasten his halter, an', not thinkin' the beast could be vicious, I went past him without givin' proper heed, when he pinned me against one of the timbers with such force that I thought every bone in my body was broken."

Sam was forced to cease speaking in order to eject the blood which had come into his mouth while he was in a paroxysm of pain, for the act of coughing seemed to cause him the greatest agony, and I inquired of the surgeon:

"Do you think any serious injury may have been done?"

"It is hard diagnosing these internal hurts," the officer replied. "The patient himself is the only one who can give you any information, and as a general rule, strange though it may seem, one under the in-

fluence of pain is very seldom able to locate it absolutely. My impression is, however, that the horse may have broken two or three of the trooper's ribs; the flow of blood comes directly from the stomach and signifies nothing really serious. He won't be able to take to the saddle again for some time, and the proper place for him is Savannah, if he can contrive to get there. Our hospital facilities here are very inadequate, and in the event of a battle we would find it more than difficult to attend to our wounded."

"What can be done for the poor fellow?" I asked solicitously, feeling a keen anxiety regarding the case because of the fact that I had so misjudged Sam.

"Nothing save quietude can help him. He must avoid any exercise more than may be absolutely necessary, until the ribs knit together, and, as a matter of course, have due care as to his diet meanwhile. Therefore, as I say, he should be taken to a well-appointed hospital or to some place where he can have complete rest."

The surgeon's attention was called in another direction at this instant, and when he went away in pursuance of his duty I seated myself by Sam's side, saying as I did so:

"I might have come a few moments sooner if I had believed you were really hurt as badly as you are. From the way Uncle Rube gave me the information, it was in my mind that you were playin' 'possum."

"I did it pretty well, didn't I?" he asked in a faint whisper.

"Did what?"

"Played 'possum."

"Now don't feel hurt because I said that, Sam. If you had heard Uncle Rube speak of some other person, you would have believed the same. Now that I

know you are injured, I stand ready to do anything whatsoever in my power, although it is most unfortunate that you should be in such a condition, for there is little question but that General Wheeler will arrive very soon, in which case the fact of your having deserted must be made known at once."

"Why do you think so, lieutenant?" Sam asked with a grin. "Wasn't I sent here with you to General McLaw?"

I looked at him sharply, believing for an instant that his mind was wandering, and replied soothingly:

"That was when we were here before, Sam. We have been back to the division since then."

"Yes, it may be so," he said with a most comical expression on his face. "Do you believe, lieutenant, that our generals bear in mind every private under their command, notin' when they come or where they go, unless there is somethin' to specially call their attention to such facts?"

"Of course not, Sam. That isn't to be expected. How could a man, whose mind was filled with plans for evadin' or attackin' an enemy, remember every individual face?"

"True for you, lieutenant, he couldn't, an' that is why I say I was sent here with you to take a message to General McLaw. It ain't likely our commander gave heed as to whether I got back or not, after he had seen you an' knew that the business was done. Therefore I say again I was hurt when I came to Ogeechee Church with the message hidden in the bacon."

I understood at once the drift of Sam's reasoning, and could not repress a smile, expressive both of satisfaction and delight, for it was a remarkably good plan.

Amid all the excitement of the invasion and the abortive attempts to check the enemy, no question would come up between the two commanders as to the date of Sam's injury, and I even believed General McLaw would agree, twenty hours from this time, that perhaps a man had been hurt in the stable when I delivered the message. He would not be supposed to give much attention to such a matter which was clearly not in his direct line of duty.

Therefore it was that Sam Waters, deserter, might safely set himself down as a trooper who had been seriously injured while in pursuance of an extraordinary duty, and the chances were as ten to one that when the division came up, if General Sherman's force was anywhere near at hand, the whole matter would pass off without a question.

"That's a mighty neat idea of yours, Sam," I whispered approvingly. "It pulls you out of about the tightest hole a soldier ever escaped from, an' I congratulate you on turnin' an accident to such good account. Now the question is, however, what shall be done? The surgeon says you need complete rest, an' must not take exercise, although you should be sent to Savannah. I wonder if you could ride in an ambulance?"

"Do you know where my horse is?"

"I can't say; probably somewhere roundabout here. I found that one of the officers had confiscated mine, believin' I would meet the hangman so soon as to have no further use for him. Why did you want to know, Sam?"

"I was thinkin' that I might make out to get into Savannah on his back."

"Nonsense, lad; you couldn't do anything of the kind. It would be as much as your life is worth!"

"Will you try an' find the horse for me, sir, if I'm able to get around?"

"I'll do the best I can, Sam; but don't bother your head about anything like that. What can I do for you just now?"

"Where is the old Yank?"

"Over yonder where we count on campin'."

"S'posin' we join him?"

"I wouldn't try to walk yet a while. I'll tell him to come here."

Sam turned on me suddenly with an inquiring look, and I, fearing he might be about to have another attack of pain, asked anxiously:

"What is the matter? Are you feelin' worse?"

"See here, lieutenant, don't you think it is time to stop this 'ere game? There's nobody within a hundred feet to hear us."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm allowin' that you've got to make out as if you was helpin' me over to where you're campin', but there's no need of takin' it so bloomin' serious. I can stop jabbin' this 'ere tooth so there won't be any more spittin' blood, unless the surgeon comes 'round again, an' when we get ready to light out for Savannah we'll leave this place slow-like as if all of us was invalids."

"Do you mean to tell me, Sam Waters, that you haven't been hurt?"

"Of course I haven't. I allowed you knowed all about it, but was tryin' to pull the wool over the eyes of anybody who might be listenin'."

"An' you're not in pain?"

"Well, my stomach is a little flat, 'cause of not havin' grub enough in it, an' perhaps I might have

the headache, owin' to workin' so hard in figurin' out how to twist this thing 'round jest about right."

It would actually have done me good if I could have struck the fellow one hearty blow under the eye, because of thus having fooled me. He had played his part so well as to deceive the surgeon also, and I could have sworn that I saw unmistakable traces of physical suffering on his face when he writhed before us, but yet it was all shamming.

"Well, you worked me in great shape, Sam Waters, an' from this out I reckon you can paddle your own canoe without any help from me."

"Ain't turnin' rusty, are you, lieutenant?"

"I ought not be rusty, Sam, for you have got us out of a mighty tight place, but I'm thinkin' that it's you who had best take command when we set off for Savannah, rather than me, for I am not in the game when it comes to artistic lyin'."

Sam grinned as if I had paid him a great compliment and then asked in a tone of deepest humility:

"Do you think, sir, you could help me over to where the old Yank is located?"

"I'd like to knock you down two or three times, Sam Waters, just to ease up on my pride because I've been so thoroughly taken in, but I suppose it's a case of helpin' out in your deceit, so come on. Don't get too feeble or I may be tempted to let you fall."

Any one who saw us as we went out of the hospital enclosure and walked slowly over to where I had left Uncle Rube would have felt certain I was assisting a man most grievously crippled, so well did Sam continue to play his part. Even when we were come to where the old man was sitting on the ground, hugging his knees, with his back against a tree, the supposed invalid allowed himself to sink gently down on

the pine needles with many a groan and grimace, as if the pain he strove to endure patiently was too great to be borne in silence.

"Pretty bad, ain't you, Sam?" Uncle Rube drawled.

"About used up," the trooper replied in a tone as faint as the whisper of a summer breeze.

"Think a little hardtack puddin' might help them 'ere broken ribs of yours to knit?"

"It seems as though it would, Uncle Rube, pervidin' there's plenty of bacon fat in it. Bacon fat is a great thing for such hurts, I've heard."

"Right you are, my man. I don't allow you've got strength enough to go out after a fryin'-pan, have you?"

"I can scarcely move," Sam replied, and I was such a simpleton as to go from man to man, asking for the loan of a frying-pan, in order to strengthen the game which those two frauds were playing so deliciously.

Two hours later I question if General McLaw could have said with truth that he had heard of a man's being injured in the shed where the officers' horses were stabled, for the scouts came in thick and fast, reporting that the Yankee army was advancing steadily and surely, after having thoroughly destroyed the railroad up to the point where they then were, burned many buildings at Millen and devastated the country on a line at least twenty miles wide.

About the same time it was reported that one portion of the Federal Army was marching toward Louisville, that the cavalry division under General Kilpatrick was moving rapidly toward Waynesboro, on the branch railroad leading from Millen to Augusta, and yet another division (that body of the

invaders which we had found south of the Ogeechee River) was opposite Scarboro.

In order to make plain these reports, let me say that one branch or another of the Federal Army had, after leaving Milledgeville, marched through and partially destroyed Gibson, Sandersville, Hebron, Long's Branch, Irwins, Johnson, Fenn's Branch, Davisboro, Louisville, Numpkins Station and Jacksonboro and were coming down south of the Ogeechee River so rapidly that it was possible even then they were between us and Savannah.

If ever scouts brought in reports of "disaster following thick and following faster," surely this was the time.

Providing the information could be relied upon, both of General McLaw's flanks were being turned rapidly, and an attempt to make a stand where we then were would simply have been the height of folly.

Of course Uncle Rube, not knowing the country roundabout, could have no fair idea of the situation, but Sam Waters exclaimed when the last of the reports had come to our ears:

"I reckon, 'cordin' to all accounts, that I wasted my time in gettin' jammed by that 'ere horse, for there ain't a Confederate officer in this section of the country who's got time to pay any attention to me, even if I had deserted from a dozen divisions."

"This not only means safety for you," I replied sadly, "but it is the severest blow that has been struck the Confederacy, unless our people can be massed in sufficient force to check the advance on Savannah an' its defenses."

"What are you talkin' about, lad?" Uncle Rube broke in. "It's not only a waste of time, but of sheer hard work, to put up your hands agin what's mani-

festly a decree of Providence. Uncle Billy is goin' clean through to the sea, an' while I'm wishin' him no ill luck, it's my hope he won't get into Savannah till I've had a chance to say that I walked bold an' unfettered through a rebel city when I was the only loose Yankee to be found in it."

I was not in the mood to see anything comical just then in the old Yankee's remarks. Although I had already begun to fear that we were well into the "beginning of the end," the information of our being in such sore straits both saddened and terrified me. If our people could not prevent the Yankees from marching entirely across one of our States, occupying every town and city in their path, how would it be possible for us of the South to drive beyond our borders the entire Federal force, recruited as it could be at any moment by a yet vaster army than had ever been raised, while we Confederates were at the end of our resources both as to men and money?

It was not necessary one should be thoroughly versed in military matters to understand that the order to fall back must be given without delay. General McLaw was a brave soldier and a capable officer, therefore he would not lead his men where fighting would be useless and final capture absolutely certain.

"It's a case of all hands humpin' themselves toward Savannah, eh?" Sam Waters said after a brief but painful pause, and I nodded my head.

"Why wouldn't it be a good idea for us to start on ahead? There's bound to be considerable scramblin' for provisions on the way, an' I'm not minded to go hungry if anything can be done to prevent it."

"We're in honor bound to stay here until orders have been given for the army to fall back," I replied,

and Uncle Rube sharply demanded my reasons for such a statement, whereupon I thus explained:

"We were requested by General McLaw to aid him in the defense. Now, even though we understand full well that none can be made—that all our people must fall back speedily—it would look as if Sam and I were cowards in case we set off before orders had been given to that effect."

"This 'ere fallin' back, if all hands believe as you do, that Uncle Billy is pretty nigh, won't be very much different from a reg'lar retreat," Uncle Rube said in an argumentative tone. "By holdin' on here we'll get mixed up in a rabble, an', as Sam says, be likely to go shy on grub."

"All that is very true, Uncle Rube, an' yet we must remain, as I have said," I replied, thus putting an end to further controversy. "There's no reason, however, why we may not be prepared to set off at a moment's notice, an' if you two are so disposed, we'll endeavor to march by ourselves."

"Then it stands me in hand to find my horse," Sam said, so far forgetting himself as to scramble to his feet quickly, but leaning as if in extreme pain against the trunk of a tree immediately on remembering that he was an invalid. "One of you will have to come with me while I search for him, because I don't dare to give up this 'ere game quite so soon as this."

I was not in the mood for playing the fool, even though it was necessary some one should do so, and by remaining silent I allowed Uncle Rube to understand that it would please me if he accompanied the trooper.

"I'll go with little Sammy," he said in a tone of mock sadness. "It would come nigh breakin' my

heart to have the poor fellow toddlin' 'round this 'ere camp with four or five broken ribs in his stomach."

The two set off, and had hardly more than started when I saw passing near at hand an orderly who had been at headquarters during my interview with General McLaw.

I lost no time in running after him, and, prefacing my question with the statement that I did not expect he would make reply to anything which must be kept a secret, asked if it was likely orders would soon be issued for the army to fall back.

"Within ten minutes the word will be given," he replied positively. "The commander called a council of war immediately information concerning the enemy's movements was brought in, and that was the decision arrived at."

"At such a time I suppose it would be out of place for me to ask for an interview with General McLaw?" I suggested, and he replied:

"I doubt if you could gain one just now. Have you anything of great importance to put before him?"

"Only so far as concerns myself an' my comrades. We are not attached to this division, an' if the rations run short before Savannah is reached—I suppose that will be the objective point—we are like to suffer from lack of food. Therefore it is I would ask permission from General McLaw to set off on a different course, or, perhaps, in advance of the army."

"Such a request strikes me as being rather unusual," the orderly replied with a smile, and I admitted as much, but took refuge in Sam's deceit by saying:

"One of the three, so the surgeon tells me, is seriously disabled and should not be forced to take any

exercise whatever. With the division we must hold our place in the ranks or be classed as stragglers. By ourselves, we may avoid the Yankees' line of march entirely, an' thus be able to go on at a more leisurely pace."

"I think there would be no question, if the matter was put in that form, as to the request being granted. You may come with me to headquarters, and if there is an opportunity to speak with the general, I will intercede for you."

I thanked him, as a matter of course, and we two went to the commander's quarters, where was not only a scene of activity but apparent confusion. Orderlies were being sent here or there in hot haste; scouts were arriving and rapidly imparting the information they brought, while regimental officers ran to and fro as if aimlessly.

I had no hope the request would be presented to the commander, or, if it was, that he would spare any time to give heed to it, therefore made up my mind that I would take all the chances of setting off with my comrades alone, and was about to turn away when I saw the friendly orderly whisper a few words in the ear of General McLaw.

The latter nodded his head impatiently, and I understood even before the officer came toward me that the request was granted, although I doubted seriously whether it had been understood.

"You can go when you please," the orderly said, "but let me advise you to remain as near as possible to this division, for it seems certain the Yankees are flanking us rapidly, and any deviation from the direct road may lead you into the enemy's hands."

"If I can get a decent mount for the prisoner, I'll guarantee to keep away from the Yankees," I replied,

hurrying out from amid the throng, for I knew beyond peradventure that moments were precious if I would put into execution the plan which had hastily been formed in my mind.

CHAPTER XII

BUSHWHACKERS

When I came from that plot of ground which was designated headquarters simply because the division flag had been planted there, the men had already begun making preparations for a retreat, and it could be called nothing less than that.

Some of the weaker-kneed were doing exactly as I wished to do, leaving at once, and "standing not upon the order of their going," so that they departed in the shortest possible space of time, as if fearing the enemy was close upon them. Others were feeding their horses, thinking no doubt that it might be a long time before a halt would be called once the army was in motion, and everywhere could be seen the bustle of preparation, although the command to fall back had not yet been issued.

The slightest unusual thing at such a moment might have created a stampede among our people, and I believe of a verity that the report of a musket would have sent them flying down the road like a drove of frightened sheep.

Not that they were cowards, but because all knew the enemy was pouring down upon them with a force which had already crushed everything in its path, and coming in such overwhelming numbers that de-

fense was not to be thought of. It was the prestige of General Sherman's army which won for it, without the expenditure of a single musket cartridge, the earthworks at Ogeechee Church, which cost so much of labor.

To my surprise and pleasure I found that Uncle Rube and Sam had come back from their search for the latter's horse successful, and now, when everything was in such seeming confusion, the trooper had recovered from his alleged serious injury, moving about as briskly as ever a man could.

He had already saddled and bridled my mare. His horse stood tethered to a tree close by, and Uncle Rube was looking with critical eyes at a well-built, black gelding which I supposed some one had left in his charge, until Sam Waters said impatiently, although respectfully:

"I'm thinkin', lieutenant, that if we count on headin' this 'ere procession, it's time we set off, an' unless we get a move pretty quick we're like to be crippled in the way of horses."

"Where is Uncle Rube's raw-bones?"

"I couldn't find him," Sam said innocently. "I reckon some of the officers must have confiscated him for his beauty, an' seein's how we had been done outer a valuable piece of horse flesh, I jest naturally cottoned to this one. Now I don't want Uncle Rube to have any trouble with the owner, consequently I say to you let's get off, an' thereby keep the peace."

"But you are stealin' a horse, Sam Waters!" I cried sharply, making a great effort to speak in a tone of indignation.

"I'm allowin' it ain't what you might rightly call stealin'," Uncle Rube said in that argumentative tone of his. "This 'ere critter belongs to the Con-

federates, as you might say in a measure, an' seein's I'm a prisoner they're bound to give me transportation whenever they want to lug me off to prison. Now, Sam, bein' bound by your word to General Wheeler, is obleeged to take me where I can be looked after, an' he don't steal any hoss; he jest takes government property, if so be you rebels have got a government, to lug off what the government, if so be you've got one, is bent on keepin'. That's the way I figger it."

"An' the government," Sam added in a mocking tone, "if so be we've got a government, wants to get this prisoner out of this place before Sherman's bummers come up to put an end to the perceedin's, consequently I'm throwin' my vote for a quick start."

"There's no question but that you are two good-natured rascals," I said with a laugh as I leaped into the saddle. "Take the pair, an' I venture to say they'll out-wit, out-argue an' out-eat any soldier in this country, whether he wears blue or gray."

"I'm allowin' that 'ere remark is uncalled for," Uncle Rube began gravely, and Sam, fearing lest the owner of the black horse should suddenly appear, lifted him bodily to the saddle, saying as he did so:

"This 'ere horse won't be uncalled for if you dwaddle 'round here much longer. Get a move on, an' when we're ten or a dozen miles from the nearest regiment you can argue till you're black in the face."

Then the trooper himself mounted, struck Uncle Rube's steed a blow which sent him forward at a leap, and we three were off, but not before squad after squad of the cavalry force had begun to move in this direction or that from the camp. Although claiming both my comrades as warm friends, it was in my mind that I formed one of a most disreputable trio.

We had begun the march by a desertion, had escaped prison perhaps by so successfully feigning to be seriously injured that even an experienced surgeon was deceived and wound up this portion of our career by taking a horse from one who had a better right to ride him.

"If we get into Savannah safely it will be more by good luck than good wit," I said when we were a couple of miles from the main body of the division and riding side by side. "We have done enough already to warrant our gettin' into grave an' serious difficulties."

"I reckon we'll pull through this heat all right, lieutenant," Sam Waters said cheerily. "It looks to me as if we were on the home-stretch, with big odds in favor of our gettin' under the wire in good shape. Now which way are you countin' on ridin' ?"

I was perfectly willing to lay before Sam all my plans, because his knowledge of the country nearabout was so accurate that he could not fail to be of great assistance, therefore I replied:

"It is in my mind to ride down the Statesboro road until we have crossed the river, an' then——"

"But accordin' to the report of the scouts, Yankees are thicker'n spatter down that way."

"True, but they are not standin' still. I believe they have already gone through Statesboro, an' if we ride across their trail until arrivin' at a point where the planters—in case we find any—haven't seen blue-coated foragers around, it will be safe to say we're far enough to the southward. Then we'll follow down Big Falls Creek toward Way's Station. The question of gettin' into Savannah depends simply upon the speed we make. There is no doubt but that General Sherman will attack Fort McAllister, an'

unless we get there ahead of his forces, it will be a matter of turnin' back an' huntin' some other place of refuge."

"These horses look fit to do the trick," Sam muttered approvingly. "But whether we are goin' to find any planters down along the creek or not is somethin' doubtful."

"It's certain we can't keep on a direct course, neither will it be safe to turn southward, therefore I claim to have mapped out the only plan which promises success."

"I reckon you're right, lad," Uncle Rube said decidedly, although as a matter of fact he knew nothing more about the proposition than a child because of being wholly ignorant regarding the country. "If it don't turn out as you're figgerin', I'll take command of the squad myself."

"Do you Yankees generally let prisoners boss things?" Sam asked ironically, and Uncle Rube replied promptly:

"Wa'al, I reckon they would if they got hold of one who knew more than them as was in charge of the job."

This reply silenced Sam, and I said to myself that after he had laid himself open to two or three more such retorts he would learn to keep a still tongue in his head.

We rode at a smart pace, I being determined that we should come somewhere in the vicinity of that portion of the Yankee army which was pursuing the southern course toward Savannah before drawing rein, and this we did.

Arriving at Statesboro, we found ample evidence that the enemy had occupied the town, and, to our

great satisfaction, learned of their having left there nearly six hours before our coming.

I tried to find something in the way of provisions and forage, but the men in blue, like locusts, had devoured everything they could, and, not contented even then, carried away all that remained after their feasting.

Here also we learned that within six or eight miles due south we would come upon a couple of small plantations, which it was reasonable to suppose, because of distance, had not been looted by the invaders.

We gave the horses a breathing spell of half an hour, refusing meanwhile to make an explanation as to our destination or purpose in thus traveling, for while these people of Statesboro were all favorable to the cause of secession in a greater or less degree, they might be induced, under pressure, to tell concerning that which we did not wish should be known.

"What makes you so close-mouthed, lad?" Uncle Rube whispered to me, when perhaps for the tenth time I had evaded some pointed questions.

"I'm thinkin' first of that horse you're ridin', an' again that there may be more Yankees show up in this section. If such should be the case and they learned that two Confederates rode through the town with a man in blue, it might cause us some difficulty. Perhaps it is an excess of precaution, but no good can be gained by tellin' all we know."

"That's about what I've said to Steve Stubbs again an' again, an' yet, try all I may, I can't persuade the little man to keep his tongue between his teeth."

Well, we finally went on our way again, the horses refreshed and seemingly in nowise wearied by the sharp traveling.

Sam Waters was almost boisterous in his joy when

we had ridden out of Statesboro, for he felt convinced, as did I, that it only remained for us to travel sufficiently fast in order to gain our purpose, when, as was the belief of us all, we would be safe from the invaders.

The trooper laughed, joked and sang until I begged him to be quiet, lest there should be nearer at hand than we suspected those who might strive to do us a mischief, and after a time I succeeded in reducing him to something approaching a rational frame of mind.

After a time we went on more slowly, keeping the horses steadily at a gait which I knew could not distress them for many hours yet.

Then suddenly, when I had said to myself that it was nearly time we arrived within sight of the first plantation, we were startled by seeing as she came around a bend in the road, a young girl riding with neither saddle nor bridle, and guiding a powerful bay horse as best she might by the halter.

She was yet half a mile or more distant when we first saw her, and I thought possibly the horse might be running away, until I noted the fact that she was urging him on to yet greater speed.

"What's this 'ere comin' like all possessed?" Uncle Rube cried as he reined in his steed, and involuntarily I followed his example, Sam doing the same until we three blocked the way as if intent on stopping her.

The bay horse swerved to one side as if he would run past, and then, seeing the deep ditch half filled with water, he came to a standstill, the girl crying as he did so:

"Will you help us, or do you belong to that same mob?"

I was off my mare in a twinkling, standing by the frightened woman's side, and, holding the bay by the halter lest he should unseat her, asked:

"What do you mean? What mob?"

"The bushwhackers. They are attacking the house!"

"Do we look like them pesky bushwhackers?" Uncle Rube asked with that Yankee twang of his, and the girl looked up at me in yet greater alarm, actually trembling as she noted the color of his uniform.

"We," and I motioned toward Sam Waters, "are of the Confederate Army, my girl, an' this is a prisoner we are takin' to Savannah, havin' come thus out of the way in order to escape the Yankee forces, which are following the course of the river. Tell me what you mean by the house bein' attacked? Where do you live?"

"Yonder, a mile or more, at the Carter plantation."

"An' your name is Carter?"

"Yes, my father is with General Hardee, and there is no one at home save my mother and sister. A party of bushwhackers rode up this morning, and we three women prevented them from entering the house, knowing full well what would be the result if they gained admittance. When I left they were lurking in the scrub oaks opposite the dwelling, as if bent on serious mischief. I slipped out through the stable, taking my sister's horse, and hoping I might get assistance from Statesboro. Mother insisted on my making the attempt, but I was afraid the ruin would be wrought before I could get there and back."

"I reckon here's a case where a Yankee soldier can fight side by side with you Johnnies, eh? Plague take the pesky bushwhackers! I've been jest achin'

to have a lick at 'em ever since I left Malden, an' now has come the chance!" and Uncle Rube straightened himself in the saddle until he looked not unlike pictures I have seen of Don Quixote, save that he lacked the armor.

"Of course you are goin' to dip in there, lieutenant?" Sam Waters said as he overhauled his revolver, and I replied petulantly, irritated because he should have questioned whether I would do such a thing or not:

"Of course we are! Miss Carter an' I will go ahead, for I'm not certain she can guide her horse without assistance. You an' Uncle Rube are to bring up the rear. Now," I added to the young lady, "if you will lead us in a roundabout way to the stable from which you came, it won't be a great while before those sneakin' hounds get the surprise of their lives."

"You want to get into the house without being seen?" the girl asked, and I replied emphatically in the affirmative, adding:

"I would like to give them a lesson, an' it will be of more effect if we let them show their hand first. Believin' you three women are alone, they will go to greater lengths than if they see our party, an' I want to find out if the scoundrels would really fire upon unprotected females."

"I reckon you needn't spend much time lookin' up that matter," Sam Waters said promptly. "It's just what they are most willin' to fire on. The curs don't hanker after tacklin' men if mischief can be worked with less danger."

There was no time for us to spend in idle conversation, and even as Sam spoke I urged the mare forward, taking a firm hold of the bay horse's halter lest he should not readily obey his rider's commands.

The girl led us up the road, two hundred yards perhaps, and then struck off at the right through a field where the corn was yet standing. Through this we rode another hundred yards or more, and then came to a lane, when, acting upon the advice of our guide, we dismounted and led the horses a good eighth of a mile, screened from view of those behind the buildings we could now see, by a hedge which bordered either side of the path.

Thus it was we approached the dwelling from the rear, and, as I believed, without knowledge of the cowardly crew, some of whom could be dimly seen moving to and fro within shelter of the scrub oaks in front of the house.

Our guide halted at the stable as if to say that we were to leave our horses there, but I had no idea of taking any such risks.

"If it should come to a regular fight, Miss Carter, that is to say, if the bushwhackers have sufficient courage, it is not impossible one of their first moves would be to run off the live stock, particularly the horses. Now my comrades an' I would be in a hard plight indeed if we lost these beasts, therefore I am not inclined to trust them where there is danger of their bein' stolen or burned."

The girl was perplexed for an instant, and then her face brightened as she cried:

"Do you suppose it would be possible to get them into the cellar?"

"If the doorway be high enough we shall have no difficulty. A trooper's horse soon learns to adapt himself to circumstances."

By this time a lady of middle age and a girl, evidently but little younger than our guide, appeared at a back door, showing by the expression on their faces

the mental relief which was theirs on seeing us ride up.

In a few words Miss Carter explained to her mother how she had chanced to come upon us and what it was our purpose to do.

While she was thus engaged Sam Waters found the entrance to the cellar, and to our great relief of mind we saw that, instead of the descent being made by means of steps, it was simply a roadway cut in the earth and sufficiently wide, I should judge, to admit of driving a wagon directly through it.

Double swinging-doors, not unlike those found on an ordinary stable and sufficiently heavy to resist any moderate attack if they were securely fastened on the inside, served to close the entrance, and by the time Miss Carter had finished explaining the situation, the horses were standing amid a plentiful assortment of plantation products, such as potatoes, ground-nuts, corn and sorghum.

"Hitch them so they won't get too much to eat," I said to Sam Waters as Mrs. Carter entered the cellar, and then asked that she get us a lantern or some candles, in order that we might barricade the doors, for when they had been closed the interior was dark as night, there being no windows in the base of the dwelling.

Within fifteen minutes from the time of our arrival the horses were snugly stabled in the cellar with plenty to eat, where I was confident no ordinary party of men would be able to effect an entrance save from the house above, and we had ascended to the next floor in order to learn what might be the possibilities of defense.

"Are there no negroes on the plantation?" I asked

in surprise, seeing only two female slaves in the kitchen as we came from below.

"All, except these two house servants, even to the children, went away day before yesterday to join the Yankee army, believing that the Federals had come here for no other purpose than to set them free," Mrs. Carter replied. "We have always treated our people well, and I am certain they would not have deserted me at such a time but for the stories which the ignorant whites have industriously spread in this section of the country, to the end that they might be able to plunder the plantations unchecked."

At this point the young lady who had acted as guide formally presented us to her mother and sister, and when this had been done I asked as to the weapons which might be found in the house, for the only arms we three had were heavy Colt's revolvers, one to each man.

"There is no lack of muskets," Mrs. Carter replied, leading us into the main hall, where she and her daughters had already made their preparations for defense.

Here were no less than half a dozen guns, placed where they might be most conveniently come at, and an amount of ammunition sufficient for a siege of many days' duration.

"You had prepared to give the bushwhackers a warm reception," I said, looking with admiration at the mother who could set about defending her brood as well perhaps as the master of the house might have done.

"We have already fired half a dozen shots, when the bushwhackers showed signs of making an attack, which explains why they now remain at a respectful distance."

"Are the doors an' windows fastened?"

"Of that you may be certain, lieutenant," our guide replied; "but with no protection for the glass, it would be a simple matter for the enemy to effect an entrance."

"I reckon there won't any of 'em make their way in here, miss," Uncle Rube said as he inspected the guns carefully, while the expression of satisfaction on his face told me that the arms were in serviceable condition. "I never allowed that a man from Malden, Maine, would be willin' to stand side by side with a couple of Johnnies an' fight, but then you see I hadn't counted on comin' across sich mean critters as bushwhackers. If we three can't wind up the gang that's hoverin' in them scrub oaks, it's time we found it out."

"God was good when He sent you in this direction!" Mrs. Carter said fervently, and Uncle Rube replied with a grim smile:

"I reckon you wouldn't think the Lord had any great hand in it if you knew how we happened to be on the road jest at the time we was most wanted."

A look of dismay passed over the lady's face, and I, fearing lest the old man's words should be misinterpreted, gave her a hurried account of the manner in which we had left General McLaw's division, concealing not the truth, save as to Sam's pretense of being injured.

Then Mrs. Carter explained that because so many of the poorer whites nearabout had taken to bushwhacking when the first news came of Sherman's invasion, her husband was given a furlough in order that he might take some steps toward providing means of defense for them, which accounted for the

unusual number of weapons and the amount of ammunition to be found in the dwelling.

After this, in order that we might know how determined to plunder the buildings the bushwhackers were, she told us that the negroes had been systematically enticed or driven away, so the plantation would be left unprotected, and declared that she and her daughters recognized nearly every man who was threatening them as people living nearabout who had received many favors at their hands in the past.

"Now that their purpose has been plainly avowed, I am afraid they will believe it dangerous to leave the work uncompleted, and therefore believe they will fight desperately rather than retreat."

"They can't come any too strong to suit me," Uncle Rube said in a tone of intense satisfaction. "Let 'em begin to do their worst, an' then we'll have good excuse for shootin' down every mother's son of 'em. I'm kinder achin' for 'em to strike the first blow."

Had the old man been better acquainted with this, the greatest evil which we of the South were forced to contend with during the latter days of the war, he would not have welcomed a battle with such adversaries. I knew how desperate it might be, and realized fully the difficulty which would be ours in defending not only the house but the out-buildings, while we were so few in numbers.

Should the bushwhackers succeed in firing one of the stables or corn-cribs, then was it certain we would be smoked out, with no hope of saving the property, and once in the open with three women to guard, I questioned whether it would be possible for us, however valiantly we fought, to hold our own.

CHAPTER XIII

A HOT FIGHT

I was convinced, first, that the bushwhackers were ignorant any reinforcements had gained an entrance to the house, and, secondly, that failing in frightening the women into surrendering by shooting directly at the dwelling without care as to aim, their move would be to fire the out-buildings, although by so doing they lessened the opportunities for plunder.

So engrossed had I been with the desire to aid the women and inflict summary punishment upon the bushwhackers, that I entirely lost sight of our own situation until, while making such arrangements as would permit of our moving to and fro without being seen by the enemy, Uncle Rube said grimly:

"I'm allowin', lad, that it won't be any great shakes of a job to fight off these miserable critters, but what about our gettin' into Savannah? While we're stoppin' here General Sherman's men are toddlin' right along toward the shore."

I looked at him as if not understanding the words, and he repeated:

"We can't afford to hang 'round here a great while, else I'll miss the chance of cavortin' through Savannah while the Johnnies hold possession of it."

"We must hurry up the job, for I'm not minded to fall again into the hands of the enemy."

"You'll be pavin' the way for that very thing, lad, when you go into Savannah," Uncle Rube replied with a smile, and I said irritably:

"This is no time to talk nonsense. If those fellows yonder don't get a move on pretty quick, we must start them up."

"Better first make our arrangements for takin' care of 'em," the old man drawled. "Jest now I would like to know how you count on shootin', unless we keep one man openin' an' shuttin' the door."

I had already figured out that portion of the business, and proceeded to draw down the window shades, standing at one side while doing so, in order to avoid being seen, after which I raised the sash two or three inches.

Then, leaving a musket for each of the women, after they had assured me that they were good marksmen, I took the remainder of the weapons into the front room, where the window had been prepared.

"Now, Uncle Rube, you an' Sam shall lie down here with the muzzles of your guns resting on the window ledge, but not projecting so far as to permit of their bein' seen. I'll look after the windows in the other room, where the ladies shall be stationed, an' then keep movin' about the house, for I have it in mind that they will try to sneak up toward the stables."

I was not a little troubled because the bushwhackers had thus far remained under cover. Mrs. Carter, in answer to my questions, said that just prior to our coming they showed themselves recklessly, but after she had sent two or three bullets in that direction, they vanished from view except at regular intervals, when a form could be seen flitting to and fro amid the foliage.

"Let's make certain they haven't beat a retreat," I said after having posted the ladies in the same fashion as the men had been placed. "Keep your eyes open now, an' when you see a target, fire at it."

Then I opened the front door a short distance, hop-

ing to give the impression that one of the women was peering out, and in a twinkling two bullets splintered the wood either side the doorway, thus telling that the miscreants were on the alert, but so cautious that they took good care not to show themselves.

"They are in there all right, I reckon, an' it begins to look as if some of 'em had seen us when we crept 'round by the stables, else why don't they come out?" Uncle Rube cried irritably.

Then it was I began to suspect that only a certain number of the bushwhackers had been left on guard in front and the others were making such a detour as was necessary to avoid being seen, in order that they might begin the attack from the rear.

I hurriedly ran to those apartments on the main floor, from which could be had a view of the outbuildings.

The two negro women were huddled in a corner of the room, their faces covered with aprons, and now and then convulsive sobs from one or the other told that the poor creatures were in a state of fear bordering on frenzy.

I knew full well it would be useless to attempt to bring them to their senses, for any words of mine would fall on ears deafened by terror, and giving no heed whatsoever to them, I first screened the windows by drawing the shades, and then, regardless of the destruction of property, cut peep-holes in the fabric, through which I could keep watch without being seen.

As at the front of the house, I raised the sash ever so slightly in order that there might be opportunity to fire without shattering the glass, and my preparations were no more than completed when I saw one of the scoundrels come up the same lane by which we had approached the dwelling.

He was making no special effort to conceal himself from view, probably believing the inmates of the house were watching from the front, and I had no more compunction in drawing a bead on him than I would have felt if a billy-goat was the target.

The musket was a fairly good one and my aim true. As the report of the weapon rang out the fellow raised his arms convulsively and then pitched forward on his face, most likely never realizing the change from life to death.

Sam Waters came running back excitedly as the noise of the explosion echoed through the house, and I said sharply before he had time to speak:

"Go back to your post! What right have you to leave it when the fight has begun?"

"I didn't know but that you might be needin' me," he replied shamefacedly.

"I've yet got strength enough to call for help if it becomes necessary, else you would have been sent to look after this portion of the house."

"Now don't get mad, lieutenant, for you know I'm only tryin' to do my level best. 'Cordin' to the way the old Yankee looks at it, this 'ere fight ain't anything more'n an ordinary shootin' match, when them as are behind the guns have nothin' to fear, but I know what bushwhackers are when they believe there's more'n a good show of comin' off first best."

"Yes, yes, Sam, I understand all that quite as well as you do, but it isn't necessary we should speak of it even between ourselves, lest the others are frightened more than is needful. Go back to Uncle Rube, an' if matters get too hot for me here I'll call you."

A faithful fellow was Sam Waters, with the making in him of a good comrade, therefore I did not reproach him as was my duty, but set his indiscretion

down to the score of desire to do his full share in whatsoever might be before us.

When next I turned my eyes toward the lane a second stranger was bending over the body of the first, and then I understood how poor a soldier I had been because of not reloading my musket immediately it had been discharged.

I hastened to atone for the error by ramming the cartridge home hurriedly, and before the task was concluded the bushwhacker, crouching low, was creeping back from whence he came.

Hurriedly drawing my revolver, I discharged three chambers in rapid succession, one of the bullets stopping him on his retreat.

To my mind it was certain no more of the enemy would come up that lane, at least not until after some time had elapsed, and I ran into the front room to reassure the ladies, lest they, like Sam, should believe it their duty to come to my assistance.

To my great relief, I found them crouching on the floor, keeping sharp watch from beneath the lowered window shade, and behaving as if never having heard the tokens of a fight.

"The fellows were creepin' up to make an attack on the rear of the house, I fancy, an' two will stay where they are in the lane," I said. "If you can pepper a few from here, it will teach them to be more careful."

"An' that's jest what we don't want," Uncle Rube cried from the adjoining apartment. "This 'ere fight has got to be ended mighty quick or I'll go out an' 'tend to the business myself."

Giving no heed to the old man's remark, I said, unconsciously putting into words my thoughts:

"The wind is from the south, an' it is possible one

of the stables might be fired without doin' us serious harm."

"But we would lose our horses!" Mrs. Carter exclaimed.

"Your horses?" I repeated in alarm. "Have you more than the one we took into the cellar with ours?"

"Yes, there are two others—a pair which we drive in the big carriage."

When Uncle Rube had reminded me that this fight, which we had come into by accident, must be ended quickly, otherwise it might not be possible for us to gain a refuge in Savannah, there came into my mind just the shadow of an idea that in case we could not whip the scoundrels so thoroughly as to leave them incapable of further mischief, it might be in our power to take with us in the flight the helpless women, because surely they would be better cared for in the city, even among strangers, than on this lonely plantation. Now the same thought recurred to me more definitely, and in a flash I realized that in order to do anything of the kind means of transportation would be absolutely necessary. The loss of the two horses might be irreparable.

It was with difficulty I restrained myself from reproaching the mistress of the house for not having given me this information before, but I finally succeeded in controlling my tongue sufficiently to say:

"It would be better, madam, if we could have put your horses in a place of safety when we cared for ours, an' now, whatever the risk of showin' ourselves may be, it must be done."

"Can't the girls do that portion of the work while you remain here on watch?" Mrs. Carter asked solicitously, and I replied with as much of cheeriness in my tone as could be assumed on the moment:

"I do not believe they would be able to remove the barricade which we have piled against the cellar doors on the inside, but one of them may come, if you please, to show me where the horses are kept. While we are at work you shall stand guard here, an' Uncle Rube will take his station in the rear, at the point from which I saw the enemy comin' up the lane. Sam, I'm countin' on you to bear a hand lively with me."

Miss Carter, meaning the one who had acted as our guide when we arrived, set about assisting us in a most practical manner. Without waiting for instructions, she lighted a lantern and led the way down cellar, where Sam and I worked like beavers for two or three minutes, undoing that which had cost so much labor to perform.

When the cellar doors were open once more, I peered cautiously out until having ascertained that none of the bushwhackers were in sight and then said to the young lady:

"Now lead the way an' move quickly, for we have no time to spare."

Leaving the lantern in the cellar, she ran up the incline toward the smaller of the out-buildings at a pace which I found difficult to equal, and when I passed through the door of the stable, which she left open, the work of removing the horses was already begun.

Taking from their pegs the saddles and bridles which hung near at hand, I gave them to Sam, with instructions to carry them into the house as quickly as possible, and then took charge of the beasts.

Not more than ten minutes were spent from the time we began the task until it was finished and the cellar barricaded as before.

In the meantime, so those on guard reported, there had been no signs of the bushwhackers.

Now we were, as I reckoned, ready for fight or flight, and I secretly determined that if we could not settle matters definitely before the coming night was very old, I would propose to Mrs. Carter and her daughters that they join us in the journey to Savannah. Save for the fact of leaving the plantation to the mercy of whoever might come that way, she would be better off, since there the family would be reunited.

When I was in the front room once more Uncle Rube complained bitterly of his enforced inactivity, declaring that it was a sheer waste of time to remain inside the house when, by sallying forth, we could whip all the bushwhackers that might be found among the scrub oaks.

Both Sam Waters and myself knew that the old man was boasting without proper knowledge of the subject, for even though these men were outlaws, so to speak, they could put up as stiff a fight as any soldiers in either army, particularly in the event of being cornered.

Two or three times during the afternoon did a bullet come crashing through the glass as a token that the enemy was yet on watch, and I racked my brain in vain to make out what kind of a game they were trying to play, until Sam Waters suggested, when on my rounds about the house I came to where he was posted:

"We'll catch it right soon after sunset, accordin' to the way I'm figurin' things," and he spoke as calmly as if referring to some ordinary possibility. "Just as soon as it's dark enough for 'em to creep up without bein' seen, you'll find this 'ere house sur-

rounded, an' then comes the time when we need to have our knees mighty stiff. That old Yank in there thinks he can lick a dozen of the worst bushwhackers that ever set foot on Georgia soil, an' I'm allowin' he's goin' to have a chance of seein' what he can do before this scrimmage is ended."

Sam's predictions were verified. Until the sun went down we saw no token of the enemy, and the young ladies, aided by the negro women who had partially recovered from their fit of terror, served us with a bountiful and most appetizing meal.

Miss Carter—Alice was her name—seemed to be the head and front of the household, and that she was a prime cook we three, who partook of the food while standing guard, can testify.

Shortly after sunset, when the shadows were beginning to lengthen, I called Miss Alice aside and suggested that she, with her mother and sister, go into the cellar where they would be in no danger from the bullets which I believed would soon be flying thick and fast, whereupon she plied me so adroitly with questions that I could do no less than explain what I suspected was about to happen.

"Surely it isn't in your mind that you three men are sufficient to guard this place against such an attack as you think will be made?" she cried, and I replied, grown brave because of the responsibility placed upon me:

"If we cannot hold it alone, I question whether it might be done with your aid, an' I believe all three of us will fight the better knowin' you are in a place of safety."

"Mother and Mary may go into the cellar, but I shall stay here and do my portion of the work," she said in a tone which admitted of no argument, and

while I admired her heroism, in fact was rapidly beginning to have an admiration for all her ways, I could not but condemn the recklessness displayed.

Argue as I might, she would not listen to my proposition, but did repeat it to her mother and sister, and these two rejected it quite as promptly as she had.

"There's nothin' for it, lad, but to let 'em do their share, an' I reckon the three will make a mighty good showin'," Uncle Rube, who had overheard my urging and coaxing, said with a laugh. "That is, they will if the chance is given 'em, but I'm figgerin' that these 'ere bushwhackers have got too much water in their blood to stand up under fire."

No good could come of arguing with the old man, and motioning him to keep yet stricter watch now that night was approaching rapidly, I went from window to window, straining my eyes in the effort to see some moving object, but discovering nothing.

Then suddenly came the rattle of musketry, and apparently from every side of the house. The shattering of glass, the whistling of bullets over our heads, for the enemy had fired high, and the yells with which the bushwhackers sought to intimidate us, made for a few seconds a most deafening uproar.

Almost at the same instant came heavy blows upon both the front and one of the back doors, and I heard the report of Sam's musket.

"Stay with the women, Uncle Rube, while I go to the rear. If we're needin' help there I'll call for Miss Alice, though I'd rather the ladies were kept out of the row."

By this time the old man himself had seen a target, and from that out, during the next ten minutes, it seemed as if a continuous crackle of musketry was

kept up, we on the inside firing as rapidly as the pieces could be discharged and reloaded and the enemy apparently doing the same, with no injury having been done, so far as I could learn.

It was while we were trying to guard the entire house and at the same time pay particular attention to the doors lest they be forced in, that a crash was heard from a room on the north side, followed by a certain pounding and thumping as if men were leaping upon the floor.

"Come with me quickly!" I cried in Uncle Rube's ear, being by his side just at that moment, while Sam needed no summons, for I could hear him running toward us, and then ensued such a battle in the darkness as I hope it may never be my misfortune to take part in again.

We loaded and fired into what seemed to be a compact mass of men, and received their bullets in return, until the smoke grew so dense that we were blinded and choked, and yet neither side had gained a victory.

How many wounds had been inflicted I could not tell because we defenders of the house fought in silence, but more than once had I heard a cry of pain from the enemy, which told that our shots were taking effect, and I knew only too well that my left arm was benumbed and almost useless, owing to a wound received early in the fight.

At first I was hardly conscious of anything save the fact that I strove to kill, and then, when the fever of battle had slightly abated, I became aware that some one was continually thrusting a loaded musket into my hand, taking from me the piece I had discharged.

It was Alice Carter who thus stood at my back, doing the work of a man and doing it bravely.

The muskets were so hot that the barrels almost blistered my fingers, and I knew our defense was very nearly at an end unless some bold stroke could be decided upon, but in vain did I strive to hit upon that which would avail.

Then it was that Sam Waters showed what a glutton he could be at fighting when his blood was hot.

There was but one door in this room where we were holding the bushwhackers to their discomfiture, and Sam was by my side doing valiant work when suddenly he uttered a piercing scream, causing me for an instant to believe he had received a death-wound, and raising his musket like a club he dashed into that throng of howling, shrieking, desperate men, striking right and left, felling an enemy at every blow.

This was sufficient clue for Uncle Rube, and he followed the example, until it must have appeared to the bushwhackers as if we had received strong reinforcements.

"I cannot do my share in that kind of fightin' because of havin' only one arm," I cried loudly in Alice Carter's ear, fearing lest she might think, because I failed to follow my comrades, that I was a coward.

"I know it," she replied quietly, "and that is why I have been loading your gun."

"Bring a light here!" I heard Sam cry as the tumult subsided somewhat, and it was Mrs. Carter who obeyed the command.

The fight was over, for the time being at least, and when it was possible to distinguish objects we saw five lifeless forms in the room, but all of our party were standing.

Sam was bleeding profusely from an ugly wound on the cheek, and I saw a sinister stain on the leg of his gray trousers.

Uncle Rube had apparently received no other injury than a cut on the hand, where a bullet had just grazed the knuckles, and the three women, fortunately, were uninjured.

We were the victors, but how many of the enemy yet remained nearabout the house was a question which could not be satisfactorily answered.

"Some of 'em crawled out of the window," Sam muttered as he tried to staunch the flow of blood from his cheek.

"Five here an' two in the lane," I said. "Did you see many more, Mrs. Carter?"

"There must have been fifteen or eighteen, I think; certainly not less than twelve," she replied. "When they first came up there was no attempt at concealment, and we had a fairly good view until Alice fired a shot to warn them off."

"Then we can count that anywhere from five to eleven, some of them probably wounded, are nearabout."

"Why speculate upon that until your wounds have been cared for?" Alice Carter said solicitously. "Come into one of the back rooms, where we can get fresh water and bandages. It is horrible to remain here!"

We did as she suggested, and while Mrs. Carter was playing the part of surgeon to those of our men who were being operated upon, I unfolded the scheme which had been so long in my mind, beginning by saying:

"I believe by this time Corporal Smart understands that bushwhackers can fight as well as regular sol-

diers, an' now I will say what I hesitated to speak about a short time ago lest I cause unnecessary alarm. This class of men who have given free rein to all their passions are, when there is seemingly an opportunity to work their will, human fiends, who once thwarted will fight desperately to avenge what they come to look upon as a personal wrong. Now I believe that another attack will be made upon this house before mornin', or within twenty-four hours at the longest."

"There is no question as to that," Sam Waters cried. "We haven't seen the last of the gang by considerable, if we stay here."

"It seems necessary we three men should reach Savannah before the Yankees can do so, an' I believe, Mrs. Carter, it is your duty to go with us. Alone you cannot defend this house, an' even though we remained, I question if we could prevent the bushwhackers from workin' their will, for they can readily set fire to the buildings at any time durin' the hours of darkness. Think it over, an' say that you will go with us."

CHAPTER XIV

ABANDONING THE PLANTATION

When thus set down on paper it seems a trifling matter in comparison with the danger which threatened, for the Carter family to abandon the plantation, and yet as one considers the sacrifice which such an act demanded, it can be understood that the lady would deliberate long and earnestly before agreeing to such a decided step.

I had asked her to leave her home to the mercy of the first chance comer and at a time when she knew there were near at hand men bent not only on plundering the place, but, since the killing of their fellows, burning for what they most likely believed to be a righteous revenge.

But for the bushwhackers, this isolated plantation, so far from any line of march which either army was likely to take, would doubtless have escaped the ravages which follow in the train of war. Here probably was all of this world's goods which Mrs. Carter and her husband owned, now the negroes had run away, and it was reasonable to suppose that once this place was destroyed, they would be in straitened circumstances, if not reduced to absolute want.

However, the bushwhackers were nearabout, as we had good reason to know, and despite the best fight we might be able to make, the greater portion, if not all, of the place would be destroyed within a comparatively short space of time.

Perhaps it was selfish for Sam Waters and me to argue solely on the point of benefit to the family, and it is just possible we might have agreed to remain there a certain length of time with the poor hope of preventing the buildings from being destroyed, had it not been for our own situation.

Therefore it was that unless the lady could be persuaded to voluntarily abandon her home, we would be called upon to decide whether we were warranted in remaining longer with her, and that was a situation which, after having met Miss Alice, I was eager to avoid.

"I reckon while the women folks are thinkin' the matter over, we'd better clear out yonder room," Uncle Rube whispered to me, after our wounds were

dressed and we had congratulated each other upon having come out of the fight comparatively uninjured.

I had almost forgotten that which we left behind when coming to the rear of the building, and without allowing the ladies to understand what it was we would do, the three of us set about the gruesome task.

There was no question of burying the dead bushwhackers, first because we could not afford to spend the time, and, secondly, owing to the chances that we might be shot down while engaged in such labor. Therefore it was we dragged the lifeless forms of those whom the war had transformed from possibly fairly honest citizens into wolves in human shape out through the window, leaving them in some semblance of decency on the grass near the gateway.

It was not a task over which one cared to linger, and we performed it as rapidly as possible, both from the desire to finish the work speedily and because it might not be safe to thus expose ourselves.

When we returned to the dwelling Mrs. Carter and her daughters had arrived at their decision, which was in accordance with my hopes.

The good woman first asked me how I proposed they should travel, and when I replied that we must all go on horseback, she wanted to know whether it might not be possible for them to take the carriage, in order to carry away some of the most valuable of their possessions.

As a matter of course this could not be thought of for an instant. We would be forced to travel across the country, probably never striking the highway during the entire distance and obliged to ford the creek more than once.

"Very well," she replied sadly when I had stated

the situation plainly. "It is hard indeed to abandon our home, and yet I believe as you have said, that it could not be saved even though you were at liberty to remain with us. When shall we set off?"

"As soon as possible," I replied, eager now to be on the journey, for every hour was of the greatest value if General Sherman continued to advance as he had been doing.

"What shall be done with these two women?" and Mrs. Carter motioned toward the servants who were yet cowering in one corner of the room.

"They must be left behind, as a matter of course, since we have no means of transportation for them. It is not probable the bushwhackers will molest them, and even though the dwelling should be burned, some of the negro quarters will doubtless be spared from the flames."

The frightened creatures regained a certain portion of courage when their mistress gave them the choice of remaining in the house or taking whatsoever they desired to such a cabin as might be selected, promising to return as soon as it should be safe for her to do so, and while the negroes were acting greedily upon the permission given, we three men set about making preparations for departure, Uncle Rube taking charge of the matter as if believing he was the only one competent to assume command.

The horses were saddled while yet in the cellar, and we strapped on our blankets and such belongings as were taken with us when we left General McLaw's division.

Then the old man set about putting extra burdens on all the horses such as he believed they would be able to carry during the long march, and, as a matter

of course, the addition to their loads consisted entirely of provisions.

"We can't expect that three women are goin' to shirk along on as short allowance as we men could," he said, evidently believing some explanation necessary. "They'll have a hard jaunt of it at the best, an' my experience always has been that a full stomach goes a great ways toward revivin' a faint heart."

"There is no question but that we shall need all the provisions which can be carried," I said, cutting short his explanations. "The more you take the less will be left for those cowards who stand ready to shed human blood simply for worldly gain."

When the old man had gathered from the store in the cellar as much as we believed the horses could carry on a forced march, he called upon the women to bring out a pair of bed blankets for each of them, and in these he packed the rations, tying the different parcels to the saddles until one might have said some prosperous peddler owned the outfit.

When I believed that all was ready for the start, Mrs. Carter and her daughters came into the cellar literally loaded down with household valuables which they hoped might be saved, even in case the bushwhackers made a thorough search, and a good half hour was spent by us in hiding the collection at one corner beneath such odds and ends as could be scraped up, thus making the heap appear from the outside as if composed of rubbish.

Not until all this had been done did we take away the barricade from the cellar doors, and then the women were helped into the saddles, we men also mounting before riding out.

I had already had a consultation with Sam Waters as to the course we should take once the start was

made, and in accordance with what we then decided upon, I led the way up out of the impromptu stable, down the lane past that point where the horses shied at two lifeless bodies near the hedge and into the road, over the same course by which Miss Alice had conducted us a few hours before.

Not until we were in the highway did we move at a more rapid pace than a walk, and then after riding a mile perhaps in the direction of Statesboro, I called a halt, saying to Sam Waters:

"Now has come the time to strike out across the country. From this on you must be the leader."

"That'll be all right, lieutenant. I'll answer for it that we don't get astray, but it ain't to be expected we are certain of not comin' plump upon the Yankees at any minute."

"If we do, all this sneakin' 'round under cover of darkness will come to an end, for I'll claim you two fellows as my prisoners, an' we'll be livin' on the fat of the land once more, with nothin' to worry us, because Uncle Billy will have the trouble on his shoulders," Uncle Rube said in a tone of satisfaction, and then suddenly remembering his often expressed desire, he added: "I'll be mighty sorry, though, to go back with our folks until after we've swelled 'round Savannah a bit."

"If Sam does his duty I'm willin' to guarantee that you'll have as long a visit in the Confederate city as can be asked for," I replied, hope growing stronger in my heart now that our faces were set toward the coast once more. "We should be able to travel as far in two hours as the army would be likely to advance in a day's march, an', therefore, before sunrise ought to be a good many hours ahead. Keep the

horses movin' at a sharp pace, an' we'll make no halt until the ladies call for one."

"We are accustomed to the saddle," Miss Alice said, overhearing my words. "We should be able to hold the pace as long as you may desire," and Uncle Rube, with an assumption of gallantry which I had not believed possible the old man could assume, suggested:

"Don't try to do too much, 'cause this 'ere may be a longish kind of a journey, an' it won't pay to get tuckered out at the start."

During this brief conversation Sam Waters had been riding up and down the edge of the road to decide where he would leave the highway to strike across the country and now announced that he was ready to take command.

"Here is as good a place as any," he said to me. "The chances are this growth of pine extends as far as the creek, where we must cross, an' seein' how the horses have had a long restin' spell, there's no reason why we shouldn't push on right smart."

"Set the pace, an' we will follow," I said, bringing my horse alongside the one ridden by Miss Alice, and Sam set off as if it was his purpose to test the endurance of the animals.

Much to my surprise, the ladies were in reasonably good spirits. I had expected them to be disheartened to the verge of despair because of having left their home to the mercies of whoever might pass by, but the fact of having escaped from the bushwhackers was so great a relief that all else had for the time been forgotten.

And now of this long ride, when we men would have encouraged the women to bear the fatigue had

it not been that their endurance seemed greater than ours, it is not necessary to set down the details.

I had expected that both Sam and I would be crippled by our wounds, but much to my surprise neither of us was any the worse for wear after the stiffness of my arm had passed away, and I shall never cease to wonder why it was we came off with such trifling injuries, for the fight certainly was a hot one while it lasted.

We continued on without drawing rein, until considerably past midnight, and then were come to the bank of the creek, having seen nothing to cause alarm during this portion of the journey.

It was high time the horses were allowed a breathing spell, and, moreover, we would be forced to search for a ford. Therefore I proposed that we halt for half an hour, while Uncle Rube declared that if such delay was to be made, he intended to "mix up somethin' for a feed."

"I reckon nobody will stop your doin' anything of the kind," Sam Waters said cheerily. "It hasn't been such a terrible long while since I filled up with grub, an' yet it really seems as if I could hear my ribs rattlin'."

Mrs. Carter and the young ladies would have acted the part of cooks, but the old man positively refused to allow them to do anything of the kind, and I understood that he was eager to show his skill with the frying-pan at the earliest opportunity, therefore held my peace.

Because of the fact that we had seen no signs of either friend or foe, I felt convinced we were so far beyond the line of travel which would ordinarily be used by pursuer or pursued, that it was safe to do

whatsoever we would, therefore made no protest when Uncle Rube set about building a camp-fire.

I waited long enough to hang a couple of blankets over the bushes in such manner that they would serve to protect the ladies from the falling dew, and then set off with Sam to search for a ford, we two stripping to the skin when beyond view of those encamped, since we must perforce go into the water waist deep, if no more, in order to find that for which we sought.

It was cold work paddling around in the creek, oftentimes submerged to our necks, but we finally succeeded in finding a practical ford, and, marking the place by breaking off the top of the shrubbery on the bank, we dressed and returned to camp, arriving there just in time to hear a cry from the foliage, where the speaker was concealed from view:

"Put up your hands, you dod-ratted Yankee, an' stand there while the women folks come out where we can see 'em!"

Sam Waters and I had not yet arrived within the small circle illumined by the camp-fire, therefore those who had spoken probably believed Uncle Rube and the ladies were the only persons in the vicinity. Unfortunately for us, however, we had left our revolvers and ammunition when going to the creek, and these, with the other weapons, were near the shelter I had put up for the ladies.

The corporal of Company G, 46th Maine, lost no time in obeying the command given by the unseen enemy, and as he stood there with both hands held high above his head, I fully expected to hear some cry from him which would give token to those in hiding that Sam and I were in the vicinity.

The old man, however, was not so simple as to do anything of that kind. He remained silent and mo-

tionless, save as his eyes rolled here and there while he searched for us, and I motioned to Sam that we were to make an effort at getting possession of our weapons.

While we were creeping through the bushes as cautiously as possible the newcomers gruffly ordered Mrs. Carter and her daughter to come out where they could be seen, and by the time this last command was obeyed Sam and I were ready for business, each holding a couple of Colt's revolvers leveled in the direction where we believed the strangers to be.

"We'll wait till they come out in sight," I whispered to Sam. "If it so be that we have run across a gang of bushwhackers, it's a case of firin' to kill without spendin' any time in parley. Shoot rapidly an' don't waste a bullet."

"I'll take care of that end of it," Sam said grimly, kneeling behind a small pine tree where he could find a rest for his weapon.

"Keep your hands up, Yank, an' don't make the mistake of tryin' to be funny, or we'll put a bullet into your ugly carcass the first move you make!" the unseen speaker cried warningly when Mrs. Carter and her daughters stood in such a position that the glare of the camp-fire came directly upon them.

"I ain't a-movin' nor don't count on bein' any sich fool," Uncle Rube replied irritably. "You've got the drop on me, an' what's the sense of foolin' 'round? There's no degree of comfort in standin' this way like a graven image. Why don't you come out an' do what you're countin' on? If there's only one of you, the odds are agin us, seein's how I haven't got anything but this 'ere spoon to help myself with."

The old man spoke unusually loud, therefore I understood that he was yet ignorant we were so near

at hand and tried thus to warn us of the unexpected and unknown danger.

His taunt provoked the enemy to show themselves without delay, and as soon as might be after he had spoken, four men, clad in Confederate uniforms, came into view.

This was a surprise to me, and while one might have counted ten I debated earnestly as to whether it would not be wiser for Sam and me to open fire at once, because it did not seem possible any members of our army could come from that direction. A party of bushwhackers might have gained possession, by fair means or foul, of the clothing in order to pass themselves off, if need arose, as regularly enlisted soldiers.

While trying to make up my mind I crouched close by Sam's side, and he laid his hand on my revolver as if to say that we should not resort to desperate measures.

"Do you know them?" I whispered softly.

"No, but I'll go bail they ain't bushwhackers."

Then it was that what seemed the proper plan of action presented itself to me, and arising to my feet, I cried sharply:

"Drop those weapons, and be quick about it, or we shall open fire! Make ready! Aim!" I continued as if giving orders to a file of soldiers, and down went the muskets and revolvers with such haste that I found it difficult to check my laughter.

"Now I reckon, my bloomin' night owls, it's time for you to march 'round here an' show yourselves!" Uncle Rube cried in delight as he stepped back a pace or two, waving his spoon as if it were a sword. "Forward! March! Keep 'em covered, lieutenant, for they may not be any better than they look!"

"Get in there, Sam, and gather up those weapons!" I cried, taking care that the words should be heard by the men who stood with upraised hands.

Sam lost no time in obeying the command, carrying the muskets and revolvers under the shelter of the blankets, and, when he had finished, motioning the ladies to resume their seats.

"Who are you?" I demanded, now stepping out where the strangers might see me.

"Confederate soldiers!" one of them replied sulkily, and a look of surprise came over his face as he saw my uniform.

"What are you doing here?"

"Scoutin', sir."

"What is your regiment?"

"Ninety-fourth Georgia infantry—General McLaw's division."

I was as much pleased as surprised at this information and was on the point of stepping forward quickly with lowered weapon when Sam Waters shouted warningly:

"Have a care, lieutenant! Because a man says a thing, it's no proof he's speaking the truth."

I was vexed with myself for having displayed so much carelessness and atoned for it by putting the strangers through a rigid examination.

"When did you leave McLaw's division?"

"Just before sunset."

"Were you ordered to scout in this direction?"

"Yes, sir. There are two hundred or more of us out, with orders to keep nearly in touch with each other, so that we may know in which direction the Yankees are comin'. I reckon we're the squad farthest to the south."

Then I asked concerning General McLaw's move-

ments, and the men answered these questions truly, so far as my own information went.

"Do you know anything that happened in your camp just before it was decided to evacuate the earthworks?" Sam Waters asked when I paused.

"Do you mean when this 'ere Yankee was pulled up for a spy?"

"Yes, somethin' of that kind."

Then we were assured that the visitors were scouts in pursuance of their regular duty, rather than bushwhackers as I at first fancied, and straightway there was no further attempt on our part to intimidate.

"It is certain your statements are true," I said after enough had been told to prove that these men were at Ogeechee Church when we were taken there as prisoners. "If you are hungry, fall to; we have provisions enough for one meal at least."

Ten minutes later we were all seated around the camp-fire enjoying the result of Uncle Rube's exertions in the culinary line, and I told the scouts sufficient of our adventures to satisfy them as to why we had apparently loitered behind General McLaw's force.

According to their best belief, the army which left Ogeechee Church could not be more than ten miles beyond where we were then halted, and there should be no difficulty in our overtaking them by daylight, providing we crossed the river, for they were on the opposite bank.

"There is no question in my mind, sir," the man who was in command of the squad continued, after giving me this information, "as to whether you had best keep on this side, seein's how you've got women folks with you, for all the news brought in shows that the Yankees are mighty close to us now, and I be-

lieved, on seeing your fire, that we had already come up with their scouts."

"Then you think we had better keep on independently?" I said half to myself, and he replied promptly:

"That's what I should do, sir, if I was countin' on gettin' this 'ere party into Savannah without mixin' 'em up in too much of a scrimmage, for it's even chances we'll be in touch with the Yankees before daylight."

"What do you say, Uncle Rube? Shall we join the division or go ahead by ourselves?"

"I reckon this 'ere 'detachment' is about as well off alone, so far as the women folks are concerned. I know we can look after 'em a good deal better than all the generals in the Confederate Army."

"Perhaps Mrs. Carter might have something to say about it?" Sam Waters suggested, and I turned toward the lady inquiringly.

"I think it is for you to decide, Lieutenant Yardley," she replied. "My daughters and I are ready to do whatsoever you think best."

"And yet you should have some preference in the matter."

"It might be selfish for me to urge that you burden yourselves with us."

"It is no burden, marm," Uncle Rube said gallantly. "We are only too glad of the chance to give you a lift, if it so be you're willin' to accept it."

"We shall be well content to remain under your care," Miss Alice said, and on the instant my decision was made.

We would push on alone, trusting to the heels of our horses to keep well in advance of both forces.

CHAPTER XV

SAVANNAH

ALTHOUGH General McLaw's scouts believed the Yankee army to be so near at hand, I observed that they were in no haste to set off on their duties, which were of such great importance to the commander.

As a matter of fact, I really believe they would have remained there contentedly until morning, taking all the chances of capture, if we had suggested such a prolonged halt, and it was this apparent indifference of the rank and file which had first caused me to believe we of the South were already the same as beaten.

When the soldiers finally moved away, in a listless fashion, Sam Waters brought up the horses for the ladies, and I set about making my mare ready for the journey.

Ten minutes later we were riding across country once more, having forded the creek without mishap, and I took good care to remain as near Miss Alice as was seemly.

What surprised me as the morning approached was that we had not come upon any signs of the men who we knew must be in advance of us. Such a force as General McLaw had with him should have left a trail so broad that we could have seen it even in the darkness, and yet when the day dawned there was no evidence that any one had traveled in that direction.

"Is it possible you may have mistaken the course, Sam?" I whispered as I spurred my horse to the trooper's side.

"I don't reckon so. Perhaps you're thinkin' we

oughter see where McLaw has passed, but I haven't been botherin' my head about anything of the kind. The division may have gone a couple of miles to the south of our course, but it won't pay us to hunt after the trail."

I soon came to understand that Sam had performed the duties of guide faithfully, for shortly before sunrise we were arrived at the bank of the creek which crossed our course from east to west, and then I knew we were not far from the river.

"Now you can see that we're all right," Sam said triumphantly, and I would have pushed on with no further halt than might be necessary, in order to find a practicable ford, had I not seen the look of exhaustion on Mrs. Carter's face.

"We'll stop here a couple of hours," I said quickly. "Even then it will be possible to reach Fort Argyle before noon."

I put up a tent formed of blankets, while Uncle Rube and Sam attended to the horses a short distance up-stream where they would not disturb the slumber of the ladies, and by the time my portion of the work had been performed, the old man was ready to act the part of cook once more.

It was a right merry meal we fugitives made, half an hour later, and had a stranger seen and heard us he might have believed we were absolutely without care as to the future.

When the appetizing breakfast had come to an end the ladies went into the tent of blankets, and once we three men were alone, I began to realize how sorely I was in need of sleep.

"If we count on staying here a couple of hours, it stands us in hand to gather in what rest we can," I said with a yawn, and Uncle Rube interrupted:

"Lie down an' have a snooze, lad. Sam an' I will take turn an' turn about till it's time to crawl into them blessed saddles agin."

"But I must stand my share of guard duty," I said, and then—suddenly I was asleep.

My eyes could not have been closed in slumber more than half an hour when I awakened suddenly, as if some person had shaken me into consciousness, and, looking around quickly, I found myself alone. Uncle Rube and Sam were nowhere to be seen. The tent of blankets in which were the women was as I had left it, and it was reasonable to suppose that its occupants were wrapped in slumber.

During a few seconds I tried to persuade myself that everything was as it should be, and then came the question as to why my comrades were absent when they had voluntarily taken upon themselves the task of standing guard.

Springing to my feet, I went further along the creek to where the horses had been tethered. All the animals were feeding quietly, but neither Uncle Rube nor Sam could be seen.

Walking rapidly, I went from one point to another until having satisfied myself that those who should have been guarding the camp were not in sight from either direction, and then, after going back to get a fresh supply of cartridges, I aroused Mrs. Carter, calling her name in a low voice, to the end that the young ladies might not be disturbed in their slumber.

She came out of the poor apology for a tent immediately, looking around in alarm as if fearing some disaster had overtaken us, and I said, speaking in what I intended should be a careless tone, as if the matter was of but slight importance:

"While I was sleeping Sam and the prisoner

strayed away, and because I am going in search of them, it seems best one of you ladies should stand guard."

"You fear something serious may have happened while you slept?" she said sharply, looking into my face keenly, as if believing it possible to read there that which I would hide from her.

"I have no reason to fear anything," I replied quickly. "I have told you all I know, and it is probable you have been awakened uselessly, yet I was unwilling to go away, leaving you ladies asleep. They are most likely hunting for a ford, and I shall spend my time only to find that I have been acting like a child. If you see or hear anything to excite alarm, empty two chambers of your revolver, and I will be with you in a twinkling."

Then I walked rapidly away, not minded to give her further opportunity to question me, keeping my eyes fixed on the soft mud on the bank of the creek in the hope of seeing that which would serve me as a trail.

Not until I was at least fifty yards from the tent of blankets could anything be seen which might give a clue to the whereabouts of my comrades. Then I came across the footprints of five men—four abreast, with one ahead or in the rear—leading up the creek, and looking as if they had just been made.

I had good reason for believing that neither Uncle Rube nor Sam would stray so far away from the encampment, without first awakening me, unless forced so to do, and therefore I was prepared for any kind of trouble which might present itself.

During nearly ten minutes I followed the trail cautiously, peering sharply ahead, lest I come too suddenly upon those I was following, and then, when

I was nearing a bend in the creek where was a clump of small bushes, the sound of voices caused me to halt suddenly, throwing myself flat upon the ground at the same time.

Thirty seconds or more passed before it was possible for me to hear the words distinctly, and then an unfamiliar voice said sharply:

"Go on, you two! Do you think I can't keep these Yanks where they belong, 'specially while they're tied back to back?"

"You dumb fools! How many times must I tell you that I ain't a Yank, but a Confederate soldier on his way to Savannah with the lieutenant of his company?"

It was Sam who spoke, and now I understood the situation of affairs as readily as if I had seen all that happened during the time I was sleeping. My comrades had strayed from the encampment in order not to disturb us who were resting with the hum of their conversation and had been made prisoners by three men, two of whom were now urged by the other to go somewhere—most likely back to the tent in order to capture the remainder of our party. I felt certain they were not soldiers bent only on doing their duty, but stragglers or bushwhackers. Therefore I would have no compunction in shooting them down if the opportunity presented itself.

While these thoughts were in my mind, the first speaker replied angrily to Sam's remark by saying:

"If you don't keep your tongue between your teeth, I'll blow the whole top of your head off! Now then, Joe, are you an' Bill goin' to finish this 'ere job, or do you count on waitin' till the rest of the gang come out to look after these chumps?"

The only chance of hiding myself was by rolling

over and over until I was under the low bank of the creek, and even then I could not count on being concealed, for if any one glanced in my direction I must perforce be discovered. However, it was better to take the chances than remain directly in the path of those who might go toward the encampment. Therefore I wallowed in the mud until I must have looked like a huge lump of clay, and was lying close by the water's edge when two men, clad in Confederate gray, came out from behind the bushes.

Only the fact that they were talking earnestly, too deeply engaged with the conversation to pay any attention to their surroundings, prevented my discovery, and I remained silent and motionless until they were thirty or more yards away.

Then, realizing keenly how important it was that I move quickly, if the women were to be spared a fright, I rose cautiously to my hands and knees, creeping as softly as might be until it was possible to see those on the other side of the bushes.

Uncle Rube and Sam, strapped back to back with their own belts, were standing on the bank of the creek looking exceedingly foolish, as well they might after having allowed themselves to be captured by three men, and in front of them, with his revolver thrust almost into Sam's face, in order to prevent the trooper from making an outcry, was a fellow whom I recognized as a deserter from my own company.

"Drop that gun, Jepson Hodge, or you're a dead man!" I cried, blaming myself even as I spoke for not shooting the scoundrel without warning.

The revolver fell from his hands on the instant, and the sickly, yellowish hue of fear came over his face as he half turned to see who had spoken.

I arose to my feet, ready to shoot at the first show

of resistance, and a long-drawn sigh of relief burst from Uncle Rube's lips, while Sam cried joyously:

"I was afraid you'd sleep too long, Bob Yardley!"

"Take the belts off those men," I said to Jepson Hodge, keeping him covered with the weapon, and in a twinkling my comrades were free.

It was with difficulty that I prevented Sam from wreaking vengeance then and there, and even the old Yankee seemed to think it necessary he should in some way punish the fellow who had treated them with such indignity, but when I explained how important it was we overtake the other scoundrels before they could do any mischief, both were ready for duty.

Then it was we trussed Jepson Hodge up like a chicken ready for the roasting, and, after taking from him all his weapons, went swiftly toward the encampment, leaving the deserter to withstand the attacks of the flies as best he might.

"We won't talk about it now," I said, when Sam would have explained how he and the old man had been captured. "It is necessary we overhaul those two villains before they can arrive at the encampment."

Swiftly and in silence we pressed forward, ready to open fire at the first opportunity, but not until we had come within sight of the tent of blankets did we see those whom we sought. Then we found the scoundrels creeping up toward the camp, most likely thinking to find more men there, and it was impossible for us to shoot without taking the chances of sending a bullet among the women.

"Stand ready to fire if they try to run!" I whispered when we had come within fifty paces of the two men, and as my comrades obeyed I shouted, "Up with your hands, and be quick about it!"

The curs obeyed even as Jepson Hodge had done, and as we marched toward them with weapons leveled, the ladies, awakened by my cry, came out of the tent to learn the cause of the noise.

Before one could have counted ten we had disarmed the fellows, and then, after explaining briefly to the ladies the situation of affairs, came the question of what we should do with our prisoners. We could not take them with us, even though we had been eager to do so, and it goes without saying that we were not willing to kill them in cold blood, however richly they probably deserved death.

Sam insisted that he be allowed to give them a severe pounding, after which, according to his promise, they would not be able to do any more mischief for some time to come, and Uncle Rube urged that they be thrown into the creek to try their skill at swimming, but I was not disposed to agree to either of the propositions.

It was while we were discussing the matter warmly that Mrs. Carter said quietly:

"You cannot afford to punish such as they appear to be. Why not disarm and turn them loose, with the promise that they shall be shot down if any attempt is made to follow us?"

Some such idea as that was in my own mind, and when she had spoken I said in a tone of command to Sam:

"See to it that they do not keep as much as a knife, and then send them up-stream, where Jepson Hodge is waiting for them. When that has been done, we will continue the march, for already too much time has been spent on this halt."

It was as if my companions understood that I was no longer in the mood for argument. Without a word

they searched their late captors for weapons, and then Sam drove the curs up the bank of the creek at the muzzle of his revolver, while the ladies went back into the tent to prepare for the journey.

Five minutes later Mrs. Carter and her daughters made their appearance, ready for the saddle once more, and Uncle Rube tore down the tent in order to roll the blankets properly. Sam, having disposed of the bushwhackers, brought up the horses; we mounted and again were on our way to the coast.

While I slept Uncle Rube had discovered a ford half a mile further down stream, and after making this detour we rode forward at a swift pace, which was checked only once before arriving at Fort Argyle, and then I was plunged into deepest despair again regarding our ability to continue the war to a successful issue.

The fortification had been abandoned and destroyed as far as possible. It was little more than a ruin, typical of our Cause, as it appeared to me, and I was not the only one who apparently viewed it in that light, for Mrs. Carter's eyes were filled with tears when I turned toward her, while the young ladies kept their faces obstinately turned aside lest we might read what was written there.

"It looks mighty tough, lieutenant," Sam Waters said to me as we sat our horses in front of the wrecked fortification.

"They were cowards to abandon it without strikin' a blow!" I cried passionately, and the trooper replied softly:

"I reckon we haven't the right to say quite that much against 'em. It's likely they knew a good bit more about the movements of the Yankees than we do, an' have gone into Fort McAllister, where the

proper kind of a defense can be made. Earthworks like this wouldn't have cut any figure in checkin' Sherman's army."

"You're right, Sam, an' I'm a fool for cryin' over spilled milk. We'll get on to the city as quickly as possible, instead of whinin' around here."

Thus speaking I wheeled the mare sharply and there was no necessity for saying anything to my companions, for they understood full well what I would do.

As before, Sam led the way, and I, not in the mood for conversation, brought up the rear, riding alone until Miss Alice, reining in her horse until I overtook her, proposed that we travel in company a short distance.

"You are feeling downcast because it seems as if the Yankees were driving us into the sea, lieutenant; but if all our people on whom we depend to hold Savannah were to fall into the same frame of mind, then might General Sherman's troops march into the city without hindrance."

I understood that she had come in order to cheer me, and felt ashamed that the girl should think it necessary that I, a soldier, who could almost claim the right to be called a veteran, should need a woman's words to bolster up his courage.

Therefore it was I did my best to speak in a merry strain, and before we had ridden ten minutes longer our party was, to outward seeming, as light of heart as could have been found anywhere in the world.

The afternoon was no more than half spent when we arrived at the outer works of Fort McAllister, and there halted until explanation could be made as to who we were and the purpose of our coming.

The story which I told was received with credit

until it became necessary to give particulars concerning Uncle Rube, and then I could understand that even the sentinels doubted the statement that General Wheeler had paroled a Yankee prisoner with the permission that he be taken into one of our strongholds.

However, we were permitted to enter the fort, and there so much attention was given to this unusual circumstance that the commandant, Major Anderson, summoned all of us before him.

I was growing weary of telling the story concerning my connection with the Yankee whom I had first met nearabout Vicksburg, but it was necessary to repeat it once more, and this time perhaps there could be more credit attached to it because of what he had done in behalf of Mrs. Carter and her daughters.

It so chanced that Major Anderson was a personal friend of Captain Carter's, and when I had introduced the ladies, he gave them the pleasing intelligence that the captain had but lately gone into Savannah, where they might find him that same night simply by traveling four miles further.

I had hoped to personally give the ladies over to the captain, but Major Anderson was so insistent upon sending them forward in one of the army wagons, that I was forced to bid them a formal good-by in the presence of the commandant, and, quite as a matter of course, the leave-takings were confined to the customary formalities.

Uncle Rube, however, standing in no awe of a Confederate officer even of the highest rank, was not disposed to part company with them so abruptly, but said with that Yankee drawl, and it seemed as if he gave to his words more of the "down East twang" than ever:

"I would be right sorry to leave you so sudden, marm, if it wasn't that it stands to reason you're wantin' to see your husband as quick as you can. I count on goin' into Savannah as soon as Bob has finished up what business he's got, an' am hopin' to see you again, 'cause I'll be lookin' 'round the place a good bit, seein's how it's the first time I've ever had a chance to watch the Johnnies in a city that they was tryin' to hold."

"It should be your first duty, Corporal Smart, to search us out. We hope to see the lieutenant and yourself and Mr. Waters very often while in Savannah. Captain Carter will say to you what I am unable to regarding the gratitude we feel because of the noble defense you made in our behalf."

"Don't speak of it, marm, don't even think of it again. It was only a little side excursion for us, so to speak, an' it'll give me somethin' to talk about when I get back into Maine, for there are mighty few of us Yankees who can say they ever stood up in a decently stiff fight side by side with a Johnnie. I'm gettin' to like this part of the country mighty well, an' as I was tellin' Bob, you folks are a good deal more decent than I was expectin' to find you."

I feared the commandant might feel disgruntled because this prisoner of ours spoke so freely in his presence, and was so open with his criticisms, but the old man's blunt speech amused the major as it had many another Southern officer before him, and I believe we had less trouble in gaining credence for our story than would have been the case had he not accompanied us during the interview.

When Mrs. Carter and her daughters took their departure Major Anderson conducted them to the sally-port, where one of the army ambulances was in

waiting, and we three were left comparatively alone in his office, only an orderly and the clerk remaining in the apartment.

Then it was that Sam Waters took occasion to whisper to me:

"I'm beginnin' to wonder if there's any chance of our runnin' across General Wheeler here, lieutenant."

"Gettin' kinder worried about that desertion, eh?" Uncle Rube asked in an incautiously loud tone, and I stepped on his toes by way of warning, for under the circumstances that was not a word which should be lightly used, lest it might cause us serious trouble.

"No, I'm not worried but that I can pull out of the hole, but I would kinder like to get my story into shape before I'm called on to tell it."

I asked the clerk if he could tell me whether General Wheeler's force was in the vicinity, and he assured me that it was not. He stated, however, for our benefit that McLaw's division had come in and been sent on to the city or some of the forts lying roundabout.

It must be understood now that our people not only occupied the immediate defenses of Savannah, but had built many forts to guard the approaches from the sea, as for instance there was one at Beaulieu, at Rosedew, White Bluff, Bonaventura, Thunderbolt, Causten's Bluff and Forts Tatnall and Boggs, together with many similar works, which formed a perfect network of defense from the sea to five or six miles inland.

When Major Anderson returned he was very much more friendly disposed toward us, or so it seemed to me, and I attributed it to the good words which Mrs. Carter and her daughters had spoken in our behalf. He had lost that overbearing manner in a great meas-

ure and ceased to treat me as an inferior, but said in a most friendly way:

"There is really nothing I can do for you here, lieutenant, and I doubt not but that you are eager to be with your regiment again; therefore you may at your pleasure go on to the city, unless you stand in need of food. I can well fancy that you have not been living overly well since leaving Carter's plantation. By the way, I wish you would tell me something concerning the attack upon the place by the bushwhackers, and the probability as to whether the buildings will be destroyed."

I related in detail all that had taken place from the time we met Miss Alice on the road, and whenever I forgot any incident which seemed to him necessary for the better understanding of the story, Uncle Rube made no hesitation in breaking in upon me, until more than once it seemed as if he, not I, was giving the information to the major.

When I had finished the commandant said thoughtfully:

"I think, Lieutenant Yardley, it would be advisable for you to present yourself to General Hardee, explaining to him how you chance to have the Yankee prisoner on your hands. It is not quite the usual thing to bring one of the enemy within our line of defense, although in this case he would find it extremely difficult to make his escape in case he attempted to play the spy; but in order to avoid all possible danger I advise you to have an interview with the department commander as soon as may be after you arrive."

"Is there any doubt, major, as to our ability to hold this place against the Yankee force which is advancing from Atlanta?"

"None whatever in my opinion, save it might be against a regular siege and a strict blockade of the coast. As to any attempt of that kind, we need have no fears, for General Sherman has not sufficient force at his command, so far as we can learn."

Then we three took our leave of the commandant, receiving from him a written permit to pass through the several lines of defense which lay between Fort McAllister and the city proper.

And now in order that whoever reads this may understand how sorely the place in which we had taken refuge was threatened, I propose to copy down here a portion of a letter written by General Sherman to General Grant on the very day when we gained entrance to Fort McAllister. This I do because it shows how ignorant many of our people were concerning the strength of the enemy, when we fondly believed Savannah was almost impregnable and because it tells better than I have succeeded in doing what a blow was struck to us of the South when the Federal Army marched from Atlanta to the sea:

"Fortunately, also, by liberal and judicious foraging, we reached the sea coast abundantly supplied with forage and provisions, needing nothing on arrival except bread. Of this we started from Atlanta with from eight to twenty days' supply per corps, and some of the troops only had one day's issue of bread during the trip of thirty days; yet they did not want, for sweet potatoes were very abundant, as well as corn-meal, and our soldiers took to them naturally. We started with about five thousand head of cattle and arrived with over ten thousand, of course consuming mostly turkeys, chickens, sheep, hogs and the cattle of the country.

"As to our mules and horses, we left Atlanta with

about twenty-five hundred wagons, many of which were drawn by mules which had not recovered from the Chattanooga starvation, all of which were replaced, the poor mules shot, and our transportation is now in superb condition. I have no doubt the State of Georgia has lost by our operations fifteen thousand first-rate mules. As to horses, Kilpatrick collected all his remounts, and it looks to me, in riding along our columns, as though every officer had three or four led horses and each regiment seems to be followed by at least fifty negroes and foot-sore soldiers, riding on horses and mules.

"The custom was for each brigade to send out daily a foraging party of about fifty men, on foot, who invariably returned mounted, with several wagons loaded with poultry, potatoes, etc., and as the army is composed of about forty brigades, you can estimate approximately the number of horses collected. Great numbers of these were shot by my orders, because of the disorganizing effect on our infantry of having too many idlers mounted.

". . . I will act as I have begun, as though the city of Savannah were my objective—namely, the troops will continue to invest Savannah closely, making attacks and feints wherever we have fair ground to stand upon, and I will place some thirty-pound Parrotts, which I have got from General Foster, in position, near enough to reach the center of the city, and then will demand surrender. If General Hardee is alarmed or fears starvation, he may surrender; otherwise I will bombard the city, but not risk the lives of our men by assaults across the narrow causeways, by which alone I can now reach it.

"If I had time. Savannah, with all its dependent

fortifications, would surely fall into our possession, for we hold all the avenues of supplies.

"The enemy has made two desperate efforts to get boats from above to the city, in both of which he has been foiled, General Slocum (whose left flank rests on the river) capturing and burning the first boat, and in the second instance driving back two gunboats and capturing the steamer *Resolute,* with seven naval officers and a crew of twenty-five seamen. General Slocum occupied Argyle Island and the upper end of Hutchinson Island and has a brigade on the South Carolina shore opposite, and is very urgent to pass one of his corps over to that shore."

CHAPTER XVI

THE SPY

As a matter of course we who proposed to shed our blood, if necessary, did not know at the time all the particulars of what General Sherman had done as stated in his letter to General Grant, a portion of which I have just copied in order to aid the reader's memory, but we realized only too well that his force outnumbered ours, and his army was in prime condition both mentally and bodily, while the men under General Hardee, like the majority of our Confederate soldiers, were illy fed, poorly clad and broken in spirits.

Fortunately for our peace of mind, neither Sam Waters nor I understood all this as we rode slowly in company with Uncle Rube from Fort McAllister into the city, else would we have been bowed down with grief.

A view of all the defenses of Savannah, apparently well armed and fully manned, raised my drooping spirits wonderfully, and I said cheerily to my comrades, for the moment forgetting that Uncle Rube might properly be called one of the enemy:

"The Yankees have had it their own way since leavin' Atlanta, but when they get here it will be a different tune they must sing. All the Federal armies put together couldn't capture the city save by a regular siege, an' even then the chances would be in our favor. It isn't a simple matter to blockade the sea-coast so effectually that a swift steamer can't slip in now an' then."

"I reckon Uncle Billy won't bother his head 'bout doin' all that," the old man said in a matter-of-fact tone. "It stands to reason that after givin' the boys what you might call a reg'lar pleasure excursion, he'll be in a hurry to get back, an' I'm allowin' that he'll jest waltz in an' capture all these 'ere little forts some mornin' when he gets ready to ride into town."

"I have heard about Yankee 'brag,' Uncle Rube, but never had an idea how extravagant it might be till I met you. Look at all these fortifications, an' then say in sober truth, if you can, that it will be a simple matter to take them."

"I've seen stronger works than these taken, an' so have you," the old man replied quietly, and I knew he was referring to Vicksburg.

It was useless to argue with one who was so confident, therefore I held my peace, but remained firm in the belief that my fears as to the weakness of the Confederacy were without real foundation and had been aroused simply by my having seen the destruction wrought in the Yankees' march through Georgia.

That Sam Waters looked at the situation in a dif-

ferent light, even as I did, since having arrived within the outer line of defenses, I understood by his sudden change of manner, and because of the great relief of mind which had thus come to us, we could well afford to listen complacently while the old man declared that the Yankees would be able to sweep everything before them.

"We'll wait till they've captured Fort McAllister," Sam said with a hearty laugh. "When that has been done, I'll get you to say a good word for me to your Uncle Billy."

"If he don't take the place it'll be owin' to his not wantin' it," was the reply in a tone of conviction, and I hastened to change the subject by saying cheerily:

"As the matter looks to me, we will be spendin' our time to more advantage if we decide what's to be done now we've arrived without our own lines."

"What do you mean by that?" Uncle Rube asked sharply. "I thought it was fixed that we were to hang on here till the town was taken."

"So far as Sam an' I are concerned, that is the fact, but how about that parole? If General Hardee doesn't see fit to accept it, you are likely to be in an uncomfortable box, instead of swellin' 'round the city as you desire."

"Do you allow it would do any good if I had a talk with him?" the old man asked, as if believing it was within his power to settle matters to his own liking.

"I fancy you'll have an interview at all events, but as I have no desire to see you thrust into prison, it stands me in hand to look about for some acquaintance of sufficiently high rank to aid me in gainin' an audience with the general, for it is not to be supposed

that every petty officer who asks to see the commander of this department would be received."

"An' where do we count on livin' meanwhile?"

"That's just what I'm tryin' to make out," I said in perplexity, and Sam Waters, who, as I was beginning to believe, always had a good idea at the right time, asked:

"What about the Carters? Wouldn't they kinder go bail for him until we could get things fixed?"

It was a happy thought, and I resolved to act upon the suggestion as soon as might be, but first it was necessary to learn where Captain Carter was stationed, and this could only be done by first finding the headquarters of his regiment.

And while I was searching for it what would become of Uncle Rube and Sam? The trooper was not bound to report immediately, as I figured it, since his regiment was elsewhere, and when we were come to the outskirts of the city where were a number of small shops stocked with such goods as soldiers would be most likely to purchase, I came to a halt.

"Go into one of these places an' find out if you can get stablin' for three horses until to-morrow mornin'," I said to Sam, and he was not absent more than five minutes when he returned with the information that we could have the desired accommodations immediately in the rear of the nearest building at the rate of five dollars in Confederate money per day for each horse.

This price was more than I could pay, and I said as much to the trooper, whereupon Uncle Rube asked:

"How many of your shin-plasters can you get for a reg'lar dollar?"

"All we need," Sam said with a laugh. "Con-

federate notes don't stand very high on the market just now."

"Wa'al, I've got nigh to three dollars, if it'll do you any good," Uncle Rube announced and would have displayed the money but that I said hurriedly:

"Don't do it in the open here where others can see. Your uniform is enough to make considerable trouble for us without a display of Yankee cash. Take the horses, Sam, into the stable, where you an' Uncle Rube are to remain out of sight until I come back, even though it shouldn't be until to-morrow mornin'."

The old man would have made some demur, but I cut him short by saying sharply:

"We can't afford to wrangle here, Uncle Rube. I'm workin' only in your interest, an' you must allow me to do as I think best."

"I reckon that's what I'll have to do, seein's I'm only a prisoner in the hands of the enemy," the old man said grimly, and without further parley I dismounted, hurrying toward Bull Street as Sam and Uncle Rube led the horses away.

It was not a difficult matter to ascertain the whereabouts of Carter's regiment, for the first officer whom I met gave the desired information, and after having spent an hour or more in the search for the captain, I learned what should have been understood by me before beginning the quest.

Captain Carter was somewhere within the city, hunting for apartments in which his wife and daughters could be lodged, so one of the lieutenants of the regiments informed me, and, night having come, I was on the point of turning back to rejoin my comrades, when by the greatest piece of good luck I came full upon Colonel Valette, an officer whom I had known in Vicksburg.

To my great joy he greeted me as a friend and presently asked how long I had been in Savannah.

This opened the way for me to tell him that portion of my adventures since going into the hospital at Milledgeville and led up to the inquiries which I wanted to make.

It seemed to me as if fortune was favoring us wondrously when the colonel said in the tone of one who stands ready to do another a favor:

"I believe I can be of assistance, Yardley, for I am on General Hardee's staff, but whether between the two of us we can manage to convince the commander that it is a safe proposition, this allowing a Yankee to wander about through the defenses at will, is another matter. However, there will be no harm in the trying. If Captain Carter's family are willing to give the old man quarters with them, they as well as you answering for his keeping the parole faithfully and agreeing not to take notes of the defenses, half the battle will be won."

"But the question is, colonel, how I shall find them at once. I suppose the old man and the trooper can stay in the stable, but I am afraid that trouble may come of it, for it is in nowise certain they will keep a discreet silence regarding affairs."

"It strikes me that Captain Carter would first take his family to the Pulaski House, and, thus providing them with temporary accommodations, have a better opportunity for seeking permanent quarters."

"An' I'm a stupid for not having thought of that same thing!" I replied in a tone of vexation. "It won't take any great amount of time to learn if they are there."

"I am due at headquarters now. Therefore do you search for your acquaintances, and after having

found them, come to me. I will be on duty to-night and to-morrow."

Taking a hasty leave of the colonel, I acted upon his suggestion without delay, and much to my gratification found that Captain Carter and his family had not only engaged rooms at the hotel for a short time, but were even at that moment in the house.

It was only necessary to send up my name in order to be received without delay, and during no less than five minutes was I forced to listen to the officer's words of gratitude because of what had been done by my comrades and myself.

"Even though the bushwhackers might not have murdered them, their plight would have been terrible had those scoundrels succeeded in working their will, as I doubt not would have been the case but for the interference of you and your friends. The destruction of the property on the plantation is as nothing compared with what might have happened, and I can only hope that the time is very near at hand when you will stand in need of my services."

"I am already in need of them, captain," I replied laughingly, looking toward Miss Alice with the idea that she might add a word when the proper moment was come, which would strengthen the cause I was about to plead.

Then I told him of Uncle Rube, and found, as might have been expected, that he had already heard much concerning our prisoner.

"Colonel Valette, whom I met just before coming here, and who is a friend of mine, suggests that if your family should join with me in guaranteeing that the old man will observe strictly any rules the commanding general may impose, it would pave the way for the request which I propose to make regard-

ing his being allowed the freedom of the city. The colonel also believed that if he could live in the same house with Mrs. Carter and the young ladies, we would be comparatively certain to have no trouble."

"I understand what you mean, lieutenant, and shall really be pleased to make him a member of the family, feeling more secure while away on duty if the ladies have some man to look after them. There is little question but that we are to have fighting hot and strong before many days have passed, and I may not be so situated as to care for those who need my protection. What are your plans for the immediate future?"

"I must report as soon as may be to my colonel, as a matter of course, sir."

"Very true, and you will take the trooper with you?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Then suppose you bring your prisoner here to-night? I will see that he is not interfered with in any way by our people, although it may be necessary to keep him close in his room, for you can well understand that a Yankee on parole would not be treated very ceremoniously by our soldiers just at this time, if he should show himself too openly."

I did not allow myself the pleasure of talking with the ladies, because time was too precious just then to be spent in anything save that which was absolutely necessary. After trying to thank the captain for his kindly offer, but being checked with the reply that he was only paying his lawful debts, I hurried away toward that portion of the city where I had left my comrades, almost trembling with fear lest they had already got into serious mischief. If Uncle Rube was bent on airing his opinions regard-

ing the Confederacy and its leaders, Sam Waters was not the man who could force him to remain silent.

Much to my relief I found the two seated on a bale of straw in the small shanty which the owner dignified by the name of stable, and because they had remained there so long I set it down to the fact that Uncle Rube was talking with the negro hostler concerning the supposed evils of slavery, and getting such replies as must have mystified him greatly, for the old darkey's ideas of freedom were very vague.

By using one of Uncle Rube's dollars I paid for the stabling of the horses and received in change fifteen Confederate dollars.

This done we saddled our steeds and rode to the hotel at an ordinary pace, lest our movements attract too much attention.

Hastening through the corridor and upstairs to Captain Carter's apartments, we succeeded in avoiding the special notice of the many officers who were lounging around the hotel, and I drew a long sigh of relief when the old man was thus finally disposed of for the night.

While we were riding across the country it had not occurred to me that I might find it difficult to take care of the Yankee who had been such a good friend to me, but now that we were arrived I realized all the disagreeable incidents which might arise, as well as the positive danger to me which would come by the lightest indiscreet word or even his appearance on the street.

General Sherman's force so near at hand threatening the city, and all our people realizing to a greater or less degree the mischief which had been wrought, the sight of a Yankee, free to go and come

as he pleased, would be well calculated to incite the anger of even the most conservative Confederate.

"We will take good care of Uncle Rube and see that he comes to no harm," Miss Alice said to me laughingly, and I believed the dear girl understood exactly how anxious I was regarding the possible outcome of this matter.

"You will find your prisoner here to-morrow whenever you are at liberty to call," Captain Carter said as I was taking my departure. "Do not feel any uneasiness regarding him, for I give you my word that he shall come to no harm in your absence—that is to say, of course, if he obeys orders as one in his position should."

I looked uneasily toward the old man, fearing lest this remark might have excited his anger, but he was wondrously humble just then, and with good reason, for he must have begun to realize that his dream of "swellin' 'round" a Confederate city while on parole might not be the safest possible thing to do.

"Never you fear but I'll stay here accordin' to whatever word is given," he said to me, nodding his head emphatically. "While Sam Waters and I were in the stable I got the idee of how the folks 'round here might feel towards me. It hadn't come into my head before, but I realized then that if one of you Johnnies should show up in Malden, an' try to put on considerable many airs, there are enough roughs even in that little town to make it mighty hot. I'll do whatever the women folks say, an' that you can depend on."

"It's all right, Sam," I cried cheerily as I gained the street where the trooper sat in the saddle holding both the horses. "Uncle Rube is cowed just enough by what he has already seen to be in such a frame of

mind that he'll walk pretty near as we would have him. Now it's a case of reportin' for duty."

"An' what about me, lieutenant?" Sam asked with a certain tone of anxiety.

"You will have to shoulder a musket again, as a matter of course."

"That I am willing to do, but how are we goin' to agree about my bein' here."

"I don't fancy the regimental officers will inquire into that matter very closely. I'm countin' on sayin' that you are a member of General Wheeler's division whom I picked up on the way, an' you are asking permission to do duty here until it is possible to rejoin him. Of course if any awkward questions are asked, we must come right up and tell the truth, for then it will be shown that you didn't desert absolutely from the service, but ran away in order to be freed from the cavalry branch of the army. That's not a very good excuse, but it's 'way ahead of nothing. However, as I have said, the chances are we won't be forced to anything of the kind."

It was not till near to midnight that I succeeded in finding the quarters of my regiment, and when I reported to Colonel Larue I stated casually that I had picked up a trooper on the way who was ready to do duty with us until such time as he could be returned to the cavalry division.

"You may take him into your company, lieutenant," the colonel replied, giving little heed to the matter, much to my relief of mind. "Are you fit for service now?"

"In fairly good shape, sir."

"And you count on doing full duty?"

"If it might be, sir, that I had forty-eight hours to attend to some business affairs, it would be very

convenient, an' in event of the regiment's being summoned for immediate duty, I could join it at once."

"As you wish, lieutenant. Just now we have very little to occupy our attention, but it stands to reason that before many days have passed there will be work in plenty for all of us."

Then he fell to questioning me concerning what I knew of the Yankee force, and Sam Waters was obliged to sit on his horse a full hour before I was at liberty to send him to the stable.

"Been havin' a pretty hard tussle on my account?" the trooper asked in a voice tremulous with fear when I came out of the tent to dismiss him, and not until then did I realize that it was only natural he should have attributed my delay to some such circumstances.

"Your name was barely mentioned, Sam," I replied with a laugh. "The colonel accepted the statement that you were willing to do duty in the regiment until it was possible to rejoin the cavalry division, an' never once suspected there might be somethin' wrong."

"Well, I'll be blowed!" Sam exclaimed with a long-drawn sigh of relief. "I've seen myself led out an' shot a dozen times over since you went into the tent, an' counted for certain that you was havin' a reg'lar scrimmage with the colonel to prevent him from windin' me up in short order."

"You are beginnin' to pay the penalty for desertion," I said cheerily. "We'll hope nothin' worse comes of it than such a scare as you have just had."

My comrades welcomed me heartily, even though I roused them from their slumbers in trying to find a place in which to sleep, and Sam must have been received in a friendly spirit if no more, since I heard nothing from him until next morning, when he came

to ask what should be done with his horse and the one Uncle Rube had ridden.

"I will speak with the quartermaster as soon as it is convenient, an' I fancy we shall have no trouble in retaining possession of them while the regiment remains in the city. How did you get along last night?"

"First rate, sir. You see, I kinder made it appear as if I had left the division to go with you to help the Carter family, which explains how I got separated from the command. It made a pretty good yarn when told right, an' there's never a man in the company who don't believe all I've said, so until there's a change in the situation, I'm all right; but it won't be wise to take the old Yank 'round where any of the boys can see him, 'cause his tongue ain't exactly to be depended on, when a man is sailin' so close to the wind in the way of story-tellin' as I am."

"You needn't have any fears on that score, Sam. Uncle Rube won't travel around this town very much, except in the company of the ladies, an' as for going among the private soldiers, it would be as much as his life is worth."

"I reckon you're right, sir. The boys here are chafin' under the collar considerable about what Sherman's men have been doin' through the State, an' it's no more'n natural that they should be angry, especially those whose homes are nearabout his line of march."

"I can well fancy what would be the result if the old man should announce himself as a member of the army which has done so much mischief in Georgia."

Sam left me that he might make arrangements for the keeping of the horses, and I set about grooming myself, in the absence of any servant, for a prome-

nade through the city, which should be ended by a visit to the Carter family, for, in company with the captain, I proposed to seek out Colonel Valette.

It was yet early in the day when I approached the Pulaski House, walking slowly and looking about in the hope of meeting some one with whom I was acquainted, when suddenly it was as if my heart stood still, and then every drop of blood in my body seemed to bound through my veins with a force that threatened to rupture them.

A name came to my lips and almost escaped them, but by a most severe exercise of will I managed to hold my peace, literally staggering against a nearby railing, for my knees tottered beneath me as if all strength of muscle had suddenly vanished.

On the opposite side of the street, wearing a suit of butternut, and apparently posing as a planter, I saw none other than Dick Studley!

That he recognized me I knew full well by the sudden flushing of his face, but he allowed his eyes to gaze into mine as if we were strangers, and, save for that involuntary attempt to halt, no one would have believed he had seen anything to cause surprise or alarm.

Dick Studley a spy in the city of Savannah, and I a Confederate officer holding my peace while he thus took note of our weakness or of our strength, that his people might be advantaged!

It is little wonder that I staggered like one drunken, my head in a whirl, as I lurched into the hotel and sank upon the nearest chair.

What should I do? My duty as an officer in the Confederate Army was plain. I was a criminal if I failed to denounce him, and yet to do so would be as certain death as if I struck a knife into his heart.

Never before nor since have I experienced the agony of mind which came upon me then, and I pray to the good God that I shall not again find myself in such fear and utter abasement because of not being able to do that which I know is my solemn duty.

CHAPTER XVII

PERPLEXITY AND DANGER

How long I remained in the lobby of the hotel, absolutely unable to move or speak, I cannot say with any degree of accuracy. It seemed as if I was the victim of some horrible nightmare, and I would awaken presently to find the situation born of imagination, rather than a reality.

Then, as the moments passed, I noted that the guests of the hotel stared at me curiously, and there was a dull fear in my mind that they might be able to read the terrible secret from the expression on my face. I strove to walk about, finally succeeding after two or three vain efforts, and the exercise was beneficial so far as restoring me to a normal condition of body was concerned, but it served to show that I was suffering from no delusion.

Dick Studley was in Savannah disguised, and in event of being recognized must be condemned to a shameful death! He might have friends in the city by the score or even in the President's Cabinet, but none could save him from paying the penalty of his act. No man might ask, with any show of justice, that he be spared from that punishment which is recognized throughout the entire world as fitting such a military crime.

And I, his friend, under many obligations to him, and loving him as if he were my brother, was false to my country, to the oath I had taken to uphold the cause of secession to the best of my ability, if I failed to denounce him at the earliest possible moment.

How he had contrived to gain an entrance into the city I could not so much as guess, but I knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that escape was impossible, and if the word was spoken by me, which it was my solemn duty to speak, then his doom was sealed!

I could not do it, and if I did not, how could I look into the faces of my comrades, knowing myself to be not only a perjurer, but a traitor to my country and every one who had reposed trust in me?

It was cruel for him to come here and place me in such a horrible dilemma, I said to myself, and then came the thought that he might not have believed I was in the city. It was far more reasonable to suppose I would take service with General Wheeler after having come up with him than that I would make the attempt to travel across the country alone, when I knew beyond peradventure that the enemy were overrunning that section of the State.

Why had General Wheeler allowed me to undertake the journey when the chances were so sadly against me? Why had I insisted on leaving the Carter plantation when I might have remained without sacrifice of honor to guard the women? Why had I come into the street thus early or why had I arrived at that particular place at the exact moment when he passed?

All these questions I asked myself while raging against fate as I paced to and fro in the hotel corridor, and then finally I came to realize that I was acting childishly. The horrible fact could not be put

aside, and I must face it with so much of heroism as might be summoned.

At one moment I resolved to seek advice from Colonel Valette or Captain Carter, and then came the knowledge that such procedure would be the same as if I cried the terrible secret aloud in the streets, for they must cause a search to be made for him at once.

Should I talk with Miss Alice? She knew how great was my affection for the lad, and could guess at the depth of misery into which I would be plunged if aught of harm came to him through me. But what right had I to burden her with a secret which was too heavy for me to bear?

As the moments passed I became like a madman. The desire to confide in some one became an absolute necessity, and when it was as if I could hold my peace no longer, I saw Captain Carter and his family come down the main stairway, going out of the hotel without seeing me.

Just for an instant I was tempted to run after them, without any idea as to why, and then suddenly came the thought that Reuben Smart must be alone in his room, the captain having insisted on his remaining there rather than take the chances of getting into trouble if he showed himself publicly. He was the one man on earth on whom I could rely for sympathy, if not sound advice, and I ran up the stairs as if fearing he might give me the slip in case I delayed a single instant.

Without going through the formality of knocking, I burst into the apartment which served the Carters as a sitting-room, and the old man was before me, lounging negligently in an arm-chair as if surrounded by his friends.

"Hello, lad!" he cried as I entered. "What do you think of this for style when a poor unfortunate is held prisoner—— Why, Bob!" he gasped as I came more plainly into view. "What is the matter? Have you seen a ghost?"

"I could almost wish it had been one!" I cried hotly. "Oh, Uncle Billy, whom do you think I just met here in disguise? It was Dick Studley!"

"So Dick is here, too, eh? I reckon he was afraid I'd have too much fun all by myself, an' he wanted to be able to spin a yarn which should match mine when we got back to Malden."

"But he has come here in disguise!" I said, forcing myself to speak in a tone which might not be heard by those in the corridor and understanding that he did not realize all my words implied. "He is in this city as a spy, an' it's almost certain he can't get out! You know the penalty when a soldier is found disguised within an enemy's lines."

"The lad is too reckless, an' I've told him so time an' time agin," the old man muttered, growing alarmed, but not yet fully appreciating all the situation. "There wasn't any good of his takin' sich chances——"

"Can't you see how I am placed, Uncle Rube? I have sworn fidelity to the Cause, an' what will my people have the right to say of me from this time on, whether the Yankees whip us to-day or two years from now, if I hold my peace, knowin' that a spy from General Sherman's army is walking through our streets or takin' note of the defenses? I am bound by my oath, my honor, my duty as a soldier to inform against him, an' yet how can I fit the hangman's noose to the neck of one whom I have looked upon as a brother?"

Uncle Rube stood staring at me, silent and motionless, while one might have counted twenty, his weather-beaten face growing paler and more ghastly each instant until I believed he was about to fall in a faint, and then, sinking back in his chair, he muttered, his eyes fixed on mine:

"God help us, lad!"

"Aye, for He only *can* help us!"

I stood and he sat there staring at each other, neither able to offer any suggestion, yet it was as if my suffering had been lessened because I shared the secret with another.

"I don't reckon there's a chance you made a mistake," the old man said at length, and I shook my head decidedly.

"There can be no doubt but that it was he, unfortunately. His face flushed when he saw me, an' I noted him straighten up like one who mentally nerves himself for a blow."

"An' the lad knows as well as either you or I that you are bound to give information concernin' him," Uncle Rube said as if simply giving words to his thoughts.

"He is bound to understand it when he thinks the matter over," I replied bitterly, again saying to myself that it was cruel in him to have put me in such a position, for all this could have been avoided if he had explained that there was a possibility he might meet in this city those who knew him, and then I realized once more that he had no knowledge as to where we were.

"An' when the idee comes into his mind plainly, he will know what it's your duty to do," the old man continued with his audible thinking, and I said petulantly:

"What good can it do me that he realizes too late how cruelly I am placed?"

Uncle Rube remained silent a full minute, and then looking me squarely in the face, asked:

"Do you believe it is your duty to raise a hue an' cry this very minute?"

"It should have been done the instant I saw him, but I was too much dazed to be capable of speech. A few hours more or less cannot avail either him or me. It is impossible any person can leave the city without a military pass, an' when I speak he will be captured."

"S'posin' we turn the matter over in our minds two hours? If he can't get away, you haven't done wrong by waitin', an' it may be we shall see some way outer all this muss. Did you say anythin' to Sam Waters?"

"You are the only person to whom I dare to speak. I came directly here after seein' him."

"Now look here, Bob, if I was in your shoes I'd have a talk with the trooper. Considerin' that he's a Johnnie, I reckon him quite a sensible chap who can look around a square corner without strainin' his eyes overly much. How would it do to send him here to me? I can't leave the room, seein's I've promised the captain that I wouldn't so much as poke my nose out of the door till he got back, an' he's likely to be gone quite a spell. Say!" and the old man suddenly grew strangely eager. "Get after him right away, will you? An' see to it that he comes here on the jump!"

I realized that Uncle Rube had suddenly conceived an idea which he fancied might be worked to our benefit, but I believed it was impossible any one could aid us in the cruel predicament.

As a matter of course I knew it was my duty to go to headquarters without delay and there tell what I had seen, but being certain Dick could not succeed in leaving the city, no matter how much assistance he might have from the outside, I persuaded myself that the wait, on my part, of a few hours would not affect the result.

Because we are prone to flee from the evils of life instead of meeting them boldly, I deferred that terrible moment when I must be the instrument which sent the lad I loved to the gallows.

"Get off as soon as you can, Bob!" Uncle Rube cried feverishly. "I'm bound to see the trooper inside of ten minutes, an' if he ain't here I'll break my word to the captain by goin' out to hunt him up."

He literally pushed me from the room, and while I went down the stairs it was as if he had imparted his eagerness to me, for once in the lower corridor I ran toward the encampment at full speed, as if life or death depended upon my seeing Sam within a few seconds.

While making my way through the streets, jostled here or forced there to make a detour because of the throngs of people who were discussing the possibility of an immediate attack by the Yankees, I wondered how many of them would bestow even a pitying glance on me if I was known as a traitor who, because of a camp friendship, was willing to sacrifice one of the Confederacy's strongholds rather than deliver to the punishment he had earned a member of the invading army.

If all was known, my name would be sent throughout the length and breadth of the land as the person, next to Judas Iscariot, who should be despised beyond all possibility of forgiveness.

By turning these matters in my mind I succeeded in working myself into much the same condition as when I staggered through the hotel corridors, but I had sufficient of sense remaining to understand that I must not enter the encampment presenting so many evidences of mental suffering, and I came to a halt just beyond the regimental lines in order to recover, so far as might be in a few moments, from the frenzy which had taken possession of me.

Not until I felt certain it would be possible to hold a conversation with my comrades and yet keep the secret, did I venture within the lines.

Fortunately none of the company officers were to be seen when I went toward that portion of the encampment where were the stables, and the first man I saw was Sam Waters, who was industriously engaged grooming the horses we had brought into the city.

"Drop everything at once an' follow me!" I said, speaking sharply in order to prevent him from asking questions before obeying, and then I led the way to the rear, where no one could overhear that which I had to say.

"Don't cry out or show in any way that you are alarmed," I began in a half whisper. "Dick Studley, of Uncle Rube's detachment, is in this city as a spy. I came full upon him near the Pulaski House, an' there can be no mistake. I am nearly wild because it is my duty to give information against the lad, in which case he would surely be hanged. Go at once to Captain Carter's apartments, an' there will be found the old Yankee, who wants to speak with you immediately."

Sam looked at me as if questioning whether I had taken leave of my senses, and then whistled softly, looking around furtively to make certain there was

no one near who might have seen the expression of alarm which overspread his face.

"Don't stop to ask questions!" I cried irritably when he was about to speak. "I am bound to give information as to his bein' here, an' the very thought of sendin' the dear lad to his death makes me nearly frantic with grief!"

I was not prepared for the womanly way in which Sam expressed his sympathy, and when he laid his hand gently on mine for an instant I gave way to tears, nor am I ashamed even now because of such show of weakness, for never before was a lad placed in so cruel a position.

Sam hesitated an instant as if tempted to make some effort at checking my grief, and then suddenly he turned and ran at full speed, crying as he went:

"Tell the guard that you have sent me off in a hurry, an' I'll take the chances of runnin' past em!"

This, better than anything else could have done, brought me to my senses, and dashing the tears from my eyes, I hurried forward just in time to prevent the sentinels from firing upon him.

Then I asked myself what I should do while waiting until Uncle Rube had the interview with Sam, and, being unable to answer the question, for I did not dare go where acquaintances might be met, the only method of spending the time seemed to be by walking in that portion of the city least frequented by army officers.

As I went rapidly up this street or down that, the thought came into my mind that as yet nothing had been done toward providing for an extension of Uncle Rube's parole, but I dared not risk an interview with the commander while in such a mental condition,

even though the delay might place the old man in a dangerous position.

It began to seem much as if I might be sacrificing one friend because I dared not inform against another!

How long I walked around the street, hardly conscious of my movements, it is impossible for me to say even now while looking back upon that terrible day.

I had an indistinct idea that Sam Waters would come when the interview with Uncle Rube was at an end, and yet failed to realize that it might be impossible for him to find me, and expected, while anxiously loitering around, that he would appear to tell me what had been decided upon.

Then I was aroused into full consciousness of the surroundings by hearing the reports of heavy guns from the direction of Fort McAllister, and, hurrying toward the center of the city in order to learn the meaning of the cannonading, I found the citizens in the wildest state of excitement.

Some had one story to tell and others gave an entirely different version of the situation, but all were united upon the one fact that the Yankees were being massed in front of the principal defense of the city.

General Sherman's army had arrived, and, sifting out as much as seemed reasonable from all the rumors that could be heard, it appeared certain an attack was about to be made upon the fort.

We were to measure strength with the invaders, and I question if there was one person in Savannah, save it might be the commander himself, who believed for an instant that the enemy would be able to gain possession of the city.

My most important duty was to go with all speed

to the regimental encampment that I might be ready to march with my men in case the troops stationed in the city were sent out to reinforce those in the fort, and this obligation stood so far above that of lodging information against Dick Studley that for the time being a goodly portion of my mental burden was rolled away.

Arriving at the encampment, I found officers as well as men moving about with that nervous expectancy which one sees among troops when a battle is near at hand, and I, being the latest comer from the heart of the city, was so overwhelmed with questions as to the latest news which had been brought in that I had no opportunity to seek out Sam Waters.

Now and then at intervals of five or six minutes the booming of a single gun would be brought to us by the wind, the reports sounding in my ears like appeals for help, but no orders came to us from headquarters.

The regimental staff had their horses saddled and near at hand, as if believing we would speedily leave camp, and every one, from the colonel to the youngest drummer-boy, was in such a state of excitement that had I cried out at the full strength of my lungs that a Yankee spy was in Savannah, no person would have given heed to the words.

An hour passed, and at the end of that time it seemed positive our regiment was not to be called upon nor could we learn that any force whatsoever had been sent out from the city.

Word was passed by the orderlies that neither officers nor men would be allowed to leave the regimental lines on any pretense whatsoever, and then the several companies settled down so far as might be to a time of fevered suspense, for what man, having the

Southern Cause near to his heart, could have remained indifferent when one of our strongest outposts was thus menaced?

Now I had an opportunity to search for Sam Waters, and this I did, believing he had not yet returned from the interview with Uncle Rube. Therefore I was no little surprised at finding him completing his work of grooming the horses, much as if nothing of special importance was transpiring.

"When did you get back?" I asked in astonishment.

"Nigh to an hour ago, sir. You were here then, but I saw you talkin' with some of the officers, an' kind of allowed it wouldn't be the right thing to break in."

"Did you see the old man?"

"Oh, yes; had quite a chat with him," Sam replied in a tone so free from care that I looked at him in amazement.

"Did he have anything in mind that might help me out of this terrible difficulty?"

"Nothin' to speak of, lieutenant. He allowed that it was your duty to tell what you had seen, an' the sooner it was over the better."

"What?" I almost screamed. "Did an old townsman of Dick Studley's advise me to give him up as a spy?"

"Well, you see, there's no other way out of it for you, an' that's a fact. It's got to be done, an' the sooner the thing is over the quicker you'll quiet down, so to speak."

"But I can't do it, Sam! I dare not send that lad to the gallows after all that has occurred between us!"

"Now, look here, lieutenant," Sam said, dropping the curry-comb and brush as he leaned negligently

against a tree. "This is the way I've been figgerin' it all out: Most likely you was thinkin' of the Yankees when you run across the man you thought was Dick Studley, an' I ain't sayin' but that he looked like him. You allowed it was a sure thing, an' went to feelin' bad, like anybody would who saw a chum in a tight place."

"There could have been no mistake about it, Sam. It was Dick Studley for a certainty, an' I saw plainly that he recognized me even as I did him."

"All that may be a fact, but at the same time the old man an' I are allowin' you got kind of worked up —well, you made a mistake, that's all, but it's in your mind just the same as if it was a sure thing, so the only way out is to tell what you believe you've seen, an' Uncle Rube says you'd best not wait."

I could have struck the trooper full in the face without compunction, so deeply did he irritate me by claiming that it was possible I had imagined something instead of seeing it.

"The old man allowed that you'd kind of fly off when I told you what we'd agreed on, an' he said for you to hold your horses, 'cause it won't do any good to set your opinions agin ours. He wants you to tell that you've seen Dick, so get at it, an' the thing can't be done any too soon, else some of our officers may suspicion that you kept back the information so's to give him a chance at escape."

Like a flash of lightning in a dark night came to me with these words the possibility of what Uncle Rube and the trooper might have succeeded in doing.

Had it not been a ruse to gain time when I was sent to summon Sam Waters for an interview? Was it not possible that Uncle Rube had sent the trooper out into the street to warn Dick of his danger? Had

the lad already been warned and succeeded in making his escape?

"Now, lieutenant, take a fool's advice, an' don't make any talk," Sam said as he evidently saw by the expression on my face that I had hit some portion of the truth. "There ain't a man in this 'ere city that would do you harm, an' I know of at least two who'd be glad to help out in any snarl you might get mixed with. The old Yankee is a decent kind of a fellow, even if he does come from the North, an' that I'd say no matter how many of our people stood nearabout to hear it. He thinks as much of Dick Studley, if not more, than you do, an' his advice is for you to give information of what has been seen."

Having said this, Sam walked quickly away, as if to prevent me from questioning him, and while one might have counted twenty I stood in a daze, wondering whether I had not already played the traitor by giving this man an opportunity of doing what I now began to believe had been done.

Unless Uncle Rube had had some such idea in his mind, why should he have sent for the trooper? Save Dick had been warned by Sam Waters, and the two plotters knew that he had succeeded in leaving the city, why was the advice given for me to lodge information against the lad?

This was what I would believe, and yet came the question of how he could have got out of the city. I felt confident that all the exits were so guarded that not even a man who was best known to be an ardent supporter of the Cause would have been able to pass without a written pass from the commandant. Therefore did it seem to me positive Dick must still be within our reach.

Yet was it my duty to do as had been advised; I should not have hesitated when I first met him.

With this natural conflict of doubt and hope I mechanically walked toward the regimental headquarters, and, meeting an orderly on the colonel's staff, asked for an interview.

Now that I had gone so far on the road toward betraying my friend to his executioners, the work must be done properly, and I realized that it was necessary a different bearing be assumed, else all the shameful facts might be suspected.

Mentally bracing myself for what would be a most painful ordeal, I waited in fear and trembling until word was brought that the colonel would see me, and then walked into his tent with something at least approaching a military demeanor.

"You wish to speak with me, lieutenant?" the colonel said as I saluted and stood before him awkwardly like some schoolboy come up for punishment.

"Yes, sir. I have to report that it is my belief I saw in the city a Yankee whom I met while a prisoner with Sherman's force."

The colonel must have understood without my really intending he should do so, that I had made this discovery just before the alarm guns were sounded from Fort McAllister, and to my surprise he failed to treat the matter as I had expected.

"Did you have any talk with the man, lieutenant?"

"Oh, no, sir. I simply saw him on the other side of the street."

"Then there may have been a mistake?"

"It is possible, sir, although it doesn't seem to me probable."

"Describe him."

I did so honestly, giving all the details of his dress

and general appearance, whereupon the colonel said as if dismissing me:

"The matter shall be attended to, lieutenant, although this is not the best time that could be selected for searching out spies. There is no question but that the Yankees will make an attack upon Fort McAllister very shortly, and we may have all we can do to repel them. If you have made no mistake, your man is caged securely enough, for he cannot by any possibility get away."

I saluted and retired, the colonel's last remark making me feel no worse in mind, for he had but stated as a fact what I believed, that if Dick really was in Savannah, he could not escape.

However, my duty had been done, and a certain portion of that burden which so overwhelmed me was lifted, although in its place came the terrible fear that my friend would be arrested and executed, in which case I should always look upon myself as his murderer.

Dear as was the Southern Cause to my heart, I could not but rejoice as I thought that if an attack was made immediately, and the Yankees pressed us hard, then was it possible the lad would find some way out of what now seemed little less than a trap.

I had denounced him and thus saved my honor, although even as I said this came the thought that always in my heart would be the knowledge that before performing my duty I had given him an opportunity which he should not have had.

Sam must have had an eye out on my movements, for immediately I came from the headquarters tent he appeared and asked in a low tone, lest others might overhear:

"Did the colonel get very much excited about what you told him, lieutenant?"

"He treated the matter very quietly, I thought," was my reply.

"I reckon he believed the same as Uncle Rube an' me, that you had made a mistake, eh? Now I am tellin' you this for——"

He was interrupted by a sudden crash of heavy guns from the fort, and then a continuous roll as of thunder, which told us beyond peradventure that the attack on Fort McAllister had been begun.

CHAPTER XVIII

FORT M'ALLISTER

When the cannonading which we heard had told us beyond peradventure that the Yankees were attacking Fort McAllister, every man in the regiment fell into line, although no word of command had been given, and I venture to say that all felt much as I did, eager to be where we could take part in the conflict which was to decide whether General Sherman had come to the end of his devastating journey or if he might continue it even to the shore of the sea.

It seemed to us positive that a goodly portion of the soldiers who were camped within the limits of the city would be sent to the front, and as we stood in line, every nerve strained to its utmost tension, and listening to the heavy thunder which told that our people were battling for their homes, all gazed ear-

nestly in the direction from which a messenger would necessarily come.

"How many men has Major Anderson got?" I heard one of the officers ask another, and the reply was:

"Two hundred and fifty of the fighting force, so I am told."

"Is it enough?"

"To work the guns, yes, and there is little chance they will be called upon for anything else, because the Yankees cannot well assault it. There is a good parapet, ditch and *cheveaux de frise,** made out of large branches of live oaks."

"In addition to all that, it is defended by a line of torpedoes over which very few could pass and live," a third officer added.

It seemed to me as if while so many soldiers were idle Major Anderson's force of two hundred and fifty men might be increased to advantage, but I was a novice in the art of warfare and failed to understand that if the major had as many as were needed to work his guns, more of a garrison would only be a hindrance.

That the fort would withstand any attack which might be made upon it, I felt no doubt, and my desire to take part in the engagement was purely selfish. I burned to have a share in beating off these men in blue who had overrun our State, stripping it bare of every article of value which could be carried away and burning such as might not readily be moved.

Before five minutes had passed we understood that there would be no call made for our services, and as

*Pieces of timber traversed with spikes of iron, or of wood pointed with iron, five or six feet long, used to defend a passage or stop a breach.—*Cent. Dict.*

the men had taken their places in line without awaiting the word of command, so did they break ranks, one by one falling out to walk up to the very line of the encampment, as if by lessening the distance a few yards they might the better understand all that was going on.

"We'll have fighting enough before morning, if the Yankees don't get tired with butting their heads against the fort," my captain said to me in a cheery tone, as if the thought of going into action gave him the greatest pleasure. "Anderson's men will need to be relieved from duty after a time, and I'm hoping we shall be sent for."

"It surely seems as if we might do some good," I replied.

"Not yet, lad, not yet. The time has not come, but when it does you may depend upon it that General Hardee will send some of us along flying. As a matter of course a large number of men must be kept fresh for such work as may be done to-morrow, for it is hardly within the range of possibility that General Sherman will turn back before having had a try at us in some other direction.

Then we fell to speaking of the strength of the different works which were included in the defenses of the city, but while we yet talked the booming of the heavy guns ceased almost abruptly, and the captain cried joyously:

"We have beaten them off! The Yankees did not have the stomach to stand up against such a fortification as McAllister!"

"It is strange they made so feeble an attempt," I replied, thinking of that body of men which I had seen, well fed, well clad and evidently in the best of condition for such murderous work as war demands.

"While I was a prisoner in their hands every man seemed confident of marchin' into this city, an' I cannot understand why they have abandoned the effort so suddenly."

"I fancy it is easy of explanation, lad," the captain replied with an air of exceeding wisdom. "Since leaving Atlanta they have had it all their own way, and had come to believe our people would fall back immediately they showed themselves. Now that matters have taken a turn, they are bewildered. I am not supposing they are done with the attempt, but it is likely Sherman has discovered how useless would be any attempt at assaulting and has drawn back to change the plan of action."

I could not bring myself to believe the captain was right, and yet never a thought entered my mind that the fort had been taken in such a short space of time.

I was perplexed, but in nowise alarmed.

The moments passed and no sound came to tell us what the Yankees might be doing, but when perhaps an hour had gone by I leaped forward as does one to escape imminent danger, for I heard faintly in the distance a voice crying:

"Fort McAllister is taken!"

I was not the only one who heard these ominous words, for on looking around, doubting the evidence of my senses, I saw strong men grow pale and gaze in alarm one at another. There was a restless moving to and fro like unto nothing I can imagine save the tread of caged beasts, and never a word was spoken until we heard yet more distinctly, as if some newsboy on the street was crying his wares:

"Fort McAllister is taken!"

"It's a lie!" the captain who had been talking with me shouted as he raised his clenched fist, and then,

regardless of the orders which had been given that we remain within the lines, I saw him run forward in the direction of the city, heeding not the cries of the guard for him to halt.

In a twinkling a dozen or more followed close upon his heels, eager to learn the falsity of the statement which as yet they had not begun to fear might be true.

Never but once since have I seen the equal of this scene of confusion which the encampment presented. Men ran to and fro, frantic at being held within the confines of the lines; officers mounted their waiting steeds as if to ride away and then dismounted, to stand staring in the direction of the fort, yet able to see nothing.

Five minutes of almost painful silence, save for the trampling of many feet, and then came hoarse cries of rage, of sorrow, of incredulity.

Although so many of the officers had set the example of disobedience to orders, the men remained inside those lines, which were marked only by the pacing to and fro of the guard, making no attempt to break away, although the desire to do so must have been in their case as strong as it was in my own, and giving the best evidence that could be had as to the efficiency of their military training.

The staff officers disappeared inside the headquarters tent. As the moments passed we gathered in little knots, not questioning whether the fort had fallen, but asking how it was possible such a rumor could have been started, and while the camp resounded with the hum of voices Sam Waters came up to me as he asked:

"What do you think about it, lieutenant?"

"It's a lie, Sam! There might be some truth in it

if the battle had continued two or three hours, but surely our people never surrendered in that short space of time. How could the Yankees have gotten in so quickly even had there been none to oppose them?"

"That's just what I was thinkin', lieutenant, an' yet you know Dick Studley told me this mornin' that they'd take the fort in half an hour."

"Dick Studley!" I cried, seizing him by the coat-collar in my excitement. "Then you went to warn him! The old man's desire to have an interview with you was simply to send you forth on such a mission."

"I reckon there's no need of denyin' it now, since I've made such a bloomin' slip of the tongue, but you mustn't blame us too much, lieutenant, for we were tryin' to get you out of a hole!"

"*Me* out of a hole?"

"Aye, lieutenant. If you had given information, as was your bounden duty, as we knew you would do after thinkin' the matter over, never mind who stood in the way, an' Dick Studley had been hanged, your life, whether we whipped the Yankees or they run us off the face of the earth, would have been a burden. Yes, lieutenant, it was for you, although it stands to reason the old man would do what he could to help his friend. I wasn't trying to save the life of a Yankee spy, but to help a man who has shown himself to be a friend to me, regardless of our stations in life, so that he shouldn't carry such a burden in his heart while he lives as could hardly be borne."

"I am not sayin' but that you did me a good turn, Sam, an' yet at the same time, by my remaining idle, givin' you an opportunity to do this thing, have I been unfaithful to my oath."

"I'm not lookin' at it in that light, nor will any

reasonable man," Sam said earnestly. "Of course you was all knocked out—didn't really know what was goin' on, an' in no fit condition to appear before the commander with such a story as was to be told. The fact is, an' I know it, that you wasn't really in shape when you did go an' tell it to the colonel. Then again, no harm had been done. Dick Studley wasn't tryin' to find out what he could about the defenses, but left his lines only to learn whether there was a fair road through the swamp by which we could leave the city, for General Sherman counts on shuttin' us in like rats in a trap."

"How did he get out?" I asked, paying no attention at the moment to that which he said.

"The same way he came. We are holdin' to it that there's no danger the Yankees will come up from the south, an' that's what I allow General Sherman is countin' on doin' in case he don't make any headway with McAllister."

"How long did you talk with Dick?"

"Not above two minutes. The old man told me I was to find the lad, an' let him know that search would be made at once for a Yankee spy. When I went out of the hotel the second person I met was that same Lieutenant Studley, an', runnin' into him as if it was an accident, an' I had to clutch his coat so's to save myself from fallin', the message was delivered. He said he'd only come into the city just to show how easy it could be done, an' didn't in no ways object to goin' right out. I told him you was certain he couldn't get away, an' he laughed, tellin' me it was as easy as walkin' through one of the Maine sheep pastures. Then, promisin' to go that very minute, we parted, an' I come down to camp."

Sam had just finished his story of the plot, which

had been conceived for my benefit, when again came that sinister cry from the distance:

"Fort McAllister is taken!"

"I would like to have my hands on the throat of the man or boy who is yellin' that nonsense!" the trooper cried frantically, and almost at the same instant two of our officers who had gone out from the encampment without waiting for permission came in view.

It was not necessary I should shout to them the question which trembled on my lips, for the answer might plainly be read on their faces.

Fort McAllister had indeed been taken, and the wonder of it all was that that which we claimed to be the strongest work in the Confederacy should have been carried in hardly more than sufficient time for the Yankees to march into it as if there had been no opposition.

Immediately our officers appeared wearing that look of gloom which told its story all too plainly, a deep hush came upon the encampment. It was as if no man dared to breathe, and never one spoke until the colonel, having been apprised of the coming of these messengers of evil tidings, stepped out from the tent as he said:

"Then it is indeed true!"

He might have spoken in a whisper and we should have heard it throughout all the length and breadth of our lines, so perfect was the silence."

"The first assault was successful, and our people were overpowered!"

It was as if each of us had received a blow squarely in the face. No one spoke during a full minute, and then when a question was asked or answered, it was in that tone which is used when conversing in the presence of the dead.

Just at this moment it seems to me well that I copy down that which General Sherman himself wrote regarding the capture of the fort, for it tells the story in a few words, and with less of venom toward us of the Confederacy than I would have believed a Northern man, save those with whom I had become acquainted, could speak:

"About two o'clock in the afternoon we observed signs of commotion in the fort, and noticed one or two guns fired inland and some musket skirmishing in the woods close by. This betokened the approach of Hazen's division, which had been anxiously expected, and soon thereafter a signal officer discovered about three miles from the fort a signal flag, with which he conversed and found it belonged to General Hazen, who was preparing to assault the fort and wanted to know if I were there.

"On being assured of this fact, and that I expected the fort to be carried before night, I received the assurance of General Hazen that he was making his preparations and would soon attempt the assault. The sun was rapidly declining, and I was dreadfully impatient.

"We saw Hazen's troops come out of the dark fringe of woods that encompassed the fort, the lines dressed as on parade, with colors flying, and moving forward with a quick but heavy pace. Fort McAllister was then all alive, its big guns belching forth dense clouds of smoke, which soon enveloped our assaulting line.

"One color went down, but was up in a moment. On the lines advanced, faintly seen in the white, sulphurous smoke; there was a pause, a cessation of fire; the smoke cleared away, and the parapets were blue with our men, who fired their muskets in the air and

shouted so that we actually heard them or felt that we did.

"The fort was an inclosed work, and its land front was in the nature of a bastion and curtains, with good parapet, ditch, fraise and *cheveaux de frise,* made out of the large branches of live oaks. Luckily the rebels had left the largest and unwieldy trunks on the ground, which served as a good cover for the skirmish line, which crept behind these logs, and from them kept the artillerists from loading and firing their guns accurately.

"The assault had been made by three parties in line, one from below, one from above and the third directly in rear along the capital. All were simultaneous and had to pass a good abatis and line of torpedoes, which actually killed more of the assailants than the heavy guns of the fort, which generally overshot the mark. Hazen's entire loss was reported, killed and wounded, ninety-two. Each party reached the parapet about the same time, and the garrison inside, of about two hundred and fifty men (about fifty of them killed or wounded) were in his power."

As a matter of course we had not at the time the information which I have here copied from General Sherman's letter. All we knew was that Fort McAllister had been taken and in what seemed like an incredibly short time.

It was the only fortification upon which we depended for the safety of the city of Savannah, and if the Yankees succeeded in reducing that so readily, what might not be expected?

On the instant, as it were, we who had claimed that the Yankee army could not take the city, believed it to be almost a foregone conclusion, and, such

being the case, one can readily fancy the distress into which we were suddenly plunged.

It must be understood that with the principal fortification in the hands of the enemy, many of our works were worse than useless, for the guns of McAllister could be trained upon us, and unless there was through the swamps, as Dick Studley told Sam Waters, a passable road, then was the city absolutely invested, for, although not generally admitted, it was agreed among the best informed that the Federal blockade was at this time reasonably effective.

Why I should have taken it upon myself to make certain our people would be able to get supplies from the surrounding country in case the Yankees began a regular siege of the city, I cannot well say. There was in my mind, however, an idea that I ought to do something which might be of benefit to those who were shut up in Savannah, although it was more than presumptious for a lad to interfere in what was the duty of his superiors, and, without stopping to realize that I was likely to earn more in the way of reproof than of thanks, I hurried off in the direction which I believed Dick Studley fled when he learned that his secret had been discovered.

Not only prudence, but military duty, should have prompted me to ask for permission to go out on an independent scout, but the sudden desire to know beyond peradventure whether or no we were really at the mercy of the Yankees sent me off post haste with no preparation whatsoever for what might prove to be a dangerous journey.

Heading a direct course for the swamp, I walked rapidly, so excited with the possible fact that our commanders were deliberately deceiving us as to give no heed to those whom I passed on the road. Under

ordinary circumstances I would have scrutinized closely every person I saw, and even at this day I am puzzled to understand why there was not a suspicion in my mind that Dick Studley was not the only member of the Yankee army who had been sent to spy out the situation.

Therefore it was that I gave no heed to a loose-jointed, lantern-jawed fellow who looked at me curiously as I overtook and passed him on the road to the swamp without really being conscious of his presence until there came upon me that indefinable sense of being watched, such as one experiences when another's eyes are fastened upon him intently.

Without knowing why, I became uneasy, and, in a certain sense, distressed, although nothing could be seen in advance to cause alarm or even suspicion.

By this time I was well out of the city, very near the swamp road of which Sam Waters had spoken, and no living thing could be seen. I reproached myself with cowardice, saying mentally that having voluntarily and secretly started upon what might prove to be a dangerous enterprise, I was losing heart even when no peril menaced.

So strong did this sense of impending danger become that, really without exercise of will on my part, I stepped aside from the road amid the foliage where, half concealed from view of any who might pass that way, I gazed out through the leaves as one would who knew beyond peradventure that enemies were close on his trail.

After five minutes of anxious watching, I saw the lantern-jawed man approaching cautiously, with eyes bent on the ground as if to make certain that he was following the footprints which I had left on the loose soil. Even then I had no idea that he might be an

enemy; he was dressed in a well-worn suit of butternut and seemed familiar with his surroundings, but I was not a little startled when he half halted as he came to that point where I had turned from the highway and looked suspiciously around as if in search of me.

Just at that moment I was conscious only of a sense of anger because this fellow was following me, and, stepping quickly out from my place of concealment, I asked sharply:

"Well, are you lookin' for any one?"

"Not exactly," the stranger replied, and although he spoke but two words I started in surprise.

It was evident that he strove to speak as would one born in the South, but Uncle Rube could not have betrayed more plainly the Yankee twang even had he uttered the words carelessly.

"Who are you?" I cried quickly as I sprang forward, and realizing, as my hand instinctively sought my belt, that I was without a weapon of any kind.

I had left camp in a kind of mental daze, giving no heed to the possibilities of my venture, and thus was at the mercy of the first enemy whom I might stumble upon.

The stranger must have understood at the same moment I did that I was defenseless, for I noted a look of relief in his eyes as he said with a laugh:

"I guess it don't make any difference who I am, seein's I've got a good bit the advantage of you. S'posin' you set about giving me your family history?" and the fellow drew a heavy revolver such as I knew only too well were carried by Yankee soldiers.

There was no longer any need for me to question him, even had he been inclined to make reply, for I understood it all now that it was too late. By my

folly I had put myself in the power of a Yankee spy, and without any possibility of benefiting our people, save to the extent of giving information that the enemy was free to enter and leave Savannah at their sweet will.

"Do you reckon you've got any very 'portant business with me?" the Yankee asked, holding his weapon ready for immediate use lest I should succeed in producing some means of defense.

Just for an instant I had it in mind to attempt an escape by flight, but fortunately before there was time to make a yet greater fool of myself by any such move when he could have shot me down before I had taken a dozen steps, I pulled myself up stiffly, determined to hide, so far as might be possible, the very uncomfortable sensation which quite naturally assailed me.

"I should have business with you, an' of such a nature that would prevent you from joinin' your friends, if I hadn't been such a fool as to come out here with not even a sword," I replied, speaking stoutly, although I was in the lowest depths of despair, knowing full well that this fellow would be only too glad to return to the Yankee camp with a Confederate prisoner taken from out a city whose military commanders had declared was virtually impregnable.

"I reckon there ain't any need of mincin' matters," the man said in a tone of exultation. "I didn't poke my nose in the city with any idee of baggin' a Johnnie, but seein's how you've been so obligin' as to fall like a ripe apple into my hands, I can't seem to help takin' you with me."

"Meanin' that you count on makin' me prisoner?" I asked as if in surprise.

"You're good at guessin', for that's jest the size of it. I reckon you'd better toddle on ahead, where I can kinder keep this 'ere revolver p'inted at you, an' don't forget that it'll go off mighty sudden if you try any monkey shines."

"You're not so far from the city that you can afford to do anything of the kind, my fine fellow," I replied with a nervous laugh. "We're bound to come upon some of our patrols within the next ten minutes, an' then you may regret havin' been so eager to make a name for yourself."

"I ain't worryin' 'bout anything of that kind, Johnnie, for I've been over this road before, an' haven't seen a grayback 'round here yet. Get into marchin' order, for I'm due inside of our lines before midnight."

There was nothing for it but to obey the command, emphasized as it was by the flourished revolver, but I had no idea of yielding myself a prisoner without a struggle, even though I obeyed for the moment as if having given up all hope of escape.

"How often have you been over this road?" I asked as I stepped in front of the Yankee in compliance with the motions of his weapon.

"This is the fourth time," he replied with a grin. "You Johnnies seem to have the idee that we can't get in, but unless there's a mighty big change in the location of your troops right away, Uncle Billy can put a whole army corps inside the city while you are layin' 'round the Pulaski House, claimin' that we Yankees haven't any show of takin' the place. Five of us went into town this mornin' as slick as grease."

I had already had good proof that the enemy really held us at their mercy unless our commanders speedily attended to their duties, and my heart was heavy

indeed, for surely it seemed as if we of the South were at the last ditch, but even while thus despairing I had no idea of allowing myself to be taken as prisoner to the Yankee camp until after having made one desperate struggle for freedom.

The one hope in my mind was that we might come upon some of our people before crossing the swamp, for it was not reasonable to suppose that this road, known as it was to all, should be suddenly deserted on this day, and I strained my eyes in the advance, walking slowly meanwhile in order to gain as much time as possible.

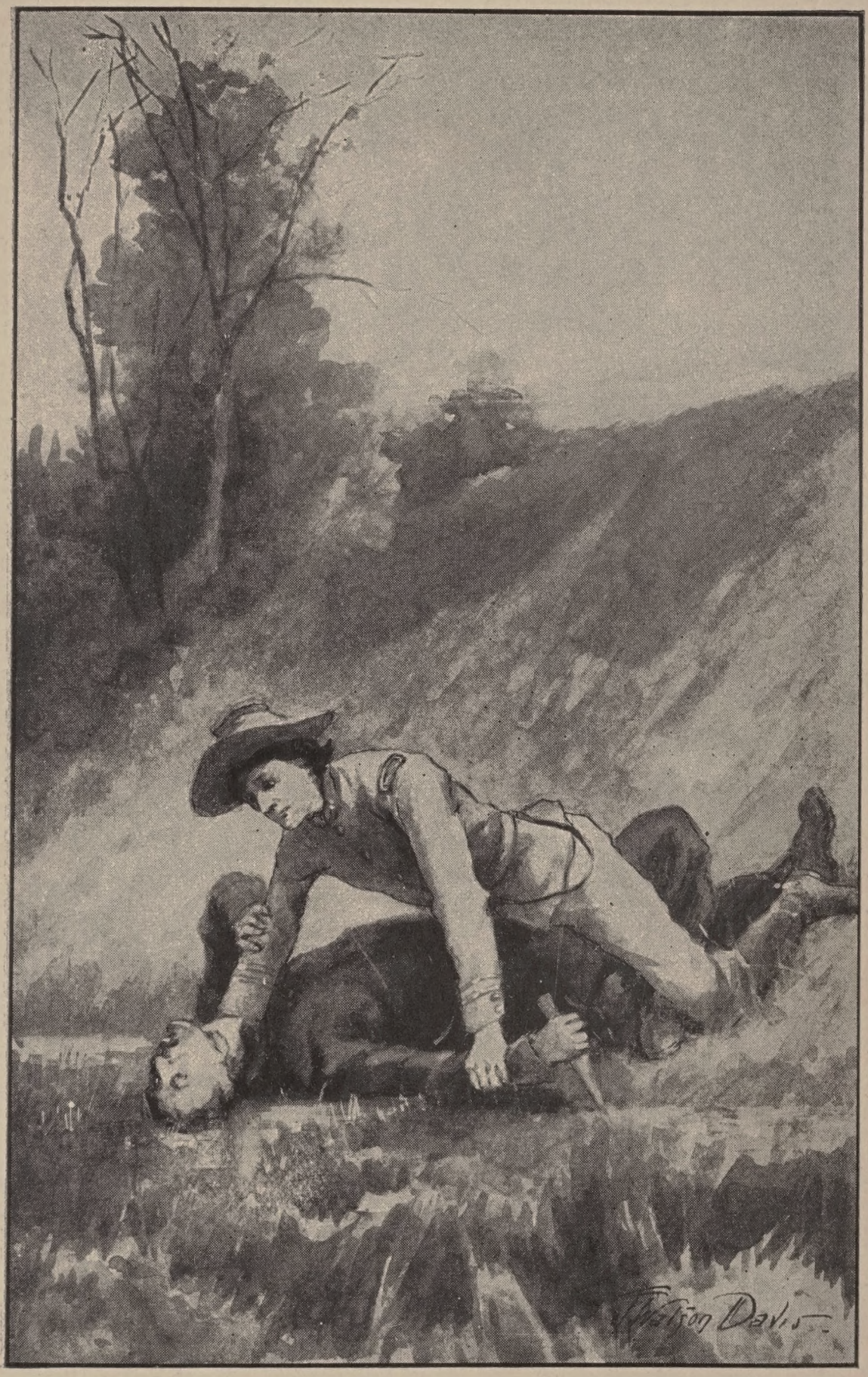
My captor did not appear unwilling to linger; it was as if he had been assured of perfect safety while in the Confederate lines, and was not disposed to exert himself unduly because of possible danger.

A hundred plans, each as impractical as the other, came into my mind as I tried to decide how I might turn the tables on this fellow who had captured me with so little difficulty, and when the decisive moment finally arrived I acted on an impulse, with no definite idea of what might be accomplished.

We had come to a shallow gully, or dry water course, I marching not more than four paces in advance of the Yankee, when the idea of the trick came into my mind. Slackening the pace ever so slightly until he was pressing closely against me, I suddenly cried out as if in great pain, and, apparently falling, clutched him by the knees as if to save myself.

Taken by surprise, the Yankee toppled over on me, and in a twinkling I grasped both his arms from behind, exerting all my strength to bring the hands together in order to possess myself of the weapon.

"So that's your game, eh?" he cried grimly, twisting himself around like an eel, despite all my efforts



Up and down the gully we writhed and floundered, yet without benefit to either of us. Page 263.

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to hold him, and immediately we were face to face, he clutching my throat with one hand as I kept the revolver arm pressed down in such a manner that he could not use the weapon.

Then ensued such a struggle as I hope I may never be forced to take part in again. I had not fully recovered from the illness which had sent me to the hospital, and even at my best I question if he was not considerably more than my equal, but the knowledge that I was fighting for freedom while the pride of having been able to capture a prisoner was all that animated him, gave me slightly the advantage.

Up and down the gully we writhed and floundered, yet without benefit to either of us. Once he braced himself against the bank of earth, in order to swing his body around sufficiently to admit of discharging the revolver, but I broke his slight hold as we rolled over and over in the dust.

Then I nearly succeeded in throwing him over on his side, where I might have wrested the weapon from his grasp, but he contrived to push me off, and was within an ace of sending a bullet through my brain.

Neither of us dared make an outcry. I feared lest other Yankee spies might be near at hand, and he was not perfectly at ease regarding the whereabouts of our people.

How long we struggled literally for life I am unable to say. There were times when the enemy got such a hold on my throat that I had no knowledge of the passing of time—knew nothing save that I must exert myself to the utmost or yield up my life. Because of the exhaustion which well nigh overpowered me, I know we fought a long while, and by the Yan-

kee's heavy breathing did I understand that he was nearly as winded as I.

After a time each exerted himself to tire out the other, despairing of gaining any signal advantage save by accident. The perspiration ran down our faces in tiny streams. The heat was overpowering and the dust of the gully filled our throats until we panted like brutes, yet we struggled desperately, each to shed the other's blood.

Then, as suddenly as the battle had been begun, it was brought to an end and by such innocent means as the whistling of a negro.

Locked desperately in each other's embrace, we ceased struggling an instant because it was absolutely necessary both of us regain our breath, and at that instant the shrill notes of "Dixie" could be heard, coming apparently from amid the foliage only a short distance away.

Wrenching himself free by a supreme effort, the Yankee sprang up the side of the gully, believing some of our people were close upon him, because of the tune he had heard, and I, with the same thought in mind, scrambled after him, shouting loudly for help.

The spy hurriedly discharged three chambers of his revolver at me, the muzzle of the weapon being within six feet of my head, and yet so unsteady was his hand after the long fight that never a missile struck me, though when I looked into the shining tube I believed of a verity that my last moment on this earth had come.

Then I was out of the gully, running as rapidly in pursuit as was possible for one in my condition, but the Yankee outstripped me, because now was he flee-

ing from the gallows, and such knowledge lent swiftness to his heels.

The chase was a short one, so far as I was concerned, because I lacked strength, and, besides, after what I had learned regarding the ease with which the Yankees could enter the city despite all our boasted precautions, it seemed by no means safe to venture very far into the swamp. Therefore I retraced my steps after the enemy had succeeded in gaining the shelter of the foliage and speedily came face to face with the whistler who surely had saved the Yankee's life or mine.

It was only a negro who, most likely, was loitering in the swamp that he might shirk the tasks his master had set for him, and was unable to answer any of my questions satisfactorily. He claimed to be ignorant regarding the termination of the swamp road, had not seen any Yankee and had simply come out for a stroll with the permission of his owner.

Nothing was to be gained by parleying with him, for it was evident that he would not give me any information of value if he could, and I set off for the camp without delay, promising myself that never again, so long as there was war in the land, would I set out from quarters, no matter what might be my errand or where my destination, without fully arming myself.

My foolish venture had borne no other fruit than such as I had ample store of before. The despair and grief in my heart was greater than when I set out, for now I knew beyond peradventure that we were hugging a delusion to our hearts when we claimed that the Yankees would not be able to capture the city save at great loss, if indeed it should be possible after a lengthy siege.

It was certain that the enemy were better informed regarding the defenses of Savannah than were our own commanders, and, such being the case, of what avail was it for us to struggle longer?

For the time being I had no hope in the future. The Cause was lost, and we who had toiled and endured in the field were being deceived by those in whom we should have been able to trust implicitly.

My heart was filled with gloom when I stood within the lines of the encampment once more, no one apparently being aware that I had been absent without leave.

It seemed to me no more than natural that in this hour of grief and despair my thoughts should turn to those whom we had rescued from the lonely plantation, and it was to me, for the moment, an imperative necessity that I see them.

It was not the time to ask for leave of absence, as I well knew, but the captain of my company had always shown himself friendly to me, and I went at once to headquarters, gaining an interview after considerable difficulty because he, like all the rest of us, was literally beside himself with apprehension and sorrow.

He already knew of our having brought the Carter family into the city with us, and I stated as my reason for going the fear lest Captain Carter might suddenly be assigned to active duty, leaving the ladies alone before suitable quarters had been provided for them. I took good care not to speak of my late adventure.

"I hardly know what to say, lieutenant," the captain replied in perplexity. "You know as well as I that every man should be ready for duty at a crisis

like this, and yet I can understand the desire to offer your services."

"In case we were summoned on duty, Sam Waters, the trooper who came in with me from up Millen way, could readily bring me the word, and I might be back in ten minutes thereafter."

"Then it is understood that you will not leave the Pulaski House save to return here?"

To this I readily agreed, since there was no other portion of the city I cared to visit, and as soon as might be thereafter I was standing in the sitting-room where Mrs. Carter, her two daughters and Uncle Rube sat in mournful silence.

I almost feared the old man would make some remark significant of the triumph which must have been in his heart at such a time, but to my great relief he handled the matter in the most sympathetic manner that can be imagined.

"I am sorry for you, lad, because I know how bound up you are in this secession business," he whispered as he took my hand, and I said to myself then and there that perhaps I had all my life entertained wrong ideas regarding these Northern people, for those with whom I had come in contact were as kindly and warm-hearted as I could have wished to meet.

Captain Carter had not returned since he left the hotel immediately after the first warning notes from the fort had been heard, and his wife, while not suffering anxiety regarding his personal safety, was perplexed because of being uncertain as to what she should do.

The search for a temporary home had been successful, and the captain had engaged a modest apart-

ment of four rooms for one month, paying the rent in advance.

"You know, Lieutenant Yardley, that our condition in life to-day is far different from what it was a week ago, and I am quite positive we cannot afford to occupy these apartments any longer than may be absolutely necessary. Do you believe the captain will return soon?"

I knew full well that he, like all other Confederate officers in the city, must be ready for the call of duty at a moment's notice, and it might be a very long time before he could return, certainly before it would be possible for him to attend to the change of quarters.

Therefore I proposed, if she thought best, that the removal be made at once.

A message could be left with the clerk of the hotel, stating what had been done, and I believed the captain would be relieved in mind when he knew that they were in a home of their own.

But for the fact of my having promised to remain at the Pulaski House, I should have gone in search of him. Since that was impossible, in view of the word I had given, I arranged, with Mrs. Carter's consent, to speak with the proprietor of the hotel relative to the amount due for board and to conduct them to their new home as soon as night had come.

"Why not go now?" Miss Alice asked.

Then I was forced to explain that I did not dare have Uncle Rube show himself on the streets in the daylight at such a time. He wore a uniform of blue, and while it was true many of our soldiers who had looted some army wagon did the same, his face and speech would betray him. I had no doubt but that

his life, in the frenzied condition of our people, would be the penalty of discovery.

Thus it was arranged that I should return to my regiment and come back later, accompanied by Sam, on whose assistance I counted in the event of our having any difficulty regarding the prisoner.

"You see I am still believin' that you will care for the corporal from the 46th Maine," I said laughingly to Mrs. Carter, and she replied promptly:

"He is to have a home with us as has already been agreed upon, and indeed we would be sorry to part with him save it should be to his benefit."

Then it was that Uncle Rube took part in the conversation for the first time. He had allowed us to settle upon the details in which he was the most interested party without speaking, but he had a suggestion to offer which I considered, in view of all that had happened, most timely and reassuring to Captain Carter as well as myself.

"If it so be that General Sherman occupies this city, marm—an' when I say he will, don't think I am tryin' to crow over you—when he does, you will be needin' the services of Reuben Smart, corporal of Company G, 46th Maine Volunteers, for it don't stand to reason your husband will be here, except as a prisoner, an' if I haven't got influence enough with them as are in command of the Union forces to pull you through all right, then it's time I left soldierin' an' tried to make a livin' out of the bounty the State offers for woodchuck hides."

"Is there any possibility the Yankees will come into this city?" Mrs. Carter cried imploringly as she turned to me, and I, who had never admitted even in my most intimate conversation with Dick Studley that such might be the case, replied sorrowfully:

"I'm afraid, madam, that there is little doubt regarding the matter. If Fort McAllister can be captured as easily as it has been, then may you judge what will be the fate of this city."

CHAPTER XIX

A LETTER

EVEN at the moment when one might almost say the fate of the Confederacy was trembling in the balance, the first thought in my mind was to establish Captain Carter's family in a temporary home, for, if the Yankees did occupy the city, it was in the highest degree necessary the ladies have an abiding-place where they would be more retired than could be possible at a hotel.

I had another reason for wishing to see them in different quarters, and this, as I have already said, was concerning Uncle Rube. Aside from the friendship which I entertained for the old man, was the responsibility of shielding from possible attack the prisoner whose safe-keeping I had undertaken.

At any time he might have been harshly treated by the rougher element of the city if he ventured into the streets, although I did not believe our people would so far demean themselves as to deliberately attack a prisoner until I had had an opportunity of seeing for myself that personal animosity was rapidly taking the place of national grievances. But now, when our strongest fortification had been captured, and it was certain Sherman's army would strike a blow at the city within a very short time, I

believe of a verity that the old man would have been killed in a twinkling had the exasperated citizens known a Yankee prisoner was at liberty in their midst.

Captain Carter, having every reason to protect this man from Maine who had done what he could to save the ladies on the plantation from harm, had caused Uncle Rube's meals to be served in his room, representing him as an invalid; but at any moment an exposure of the friendly fraud might result in murder.

Therefore it can readily be seen that I was none the less a true soldier of the Confederacy, when at such a time of national peril my first thought was concerning those who had entered the city under my guidance and safeguard.

All this I have set down twice over in order to make my position at that time so plain that any fair-minded person may understand fully the situation, because I have been accused more than once since then of having had greater anxiety concerning the well-being of a Yankee, than of the peril to which my own people were exposed.

When Mrs. Carter agreed with me in the proposition to make an immediate change of quarters, I lost no time in carrying the plan into effect, therefore took leave of the family without delay, after cautioning them against going outside the apartments until my return.

My first business was to make some arrangements with the proprietor of the hotel regarding the payment of money due him from Captain Carter. I would have discharged the debt myself; but, unfortunately, I had only a few dollars in Confederate scrip, and was unable to do as I desired.

Luckily, however, Captain Carter was well known to the employés of the house, and before I had well begun the explanation which it seemed necessary to make, I was assured that the ladies might remain or go, as best pleased them, without heed to the amount due.

Then I set off toward the encampment, counting on being able to get leave of absence under the same excuse as previously, but before arriving there I had the good fortune to meet Colonel Valette on the street. He, like all others of our people, was deeply distressed in mind concerning the situation of affairs, and so preoccupied that it seemed like taking the greatest liberty for me to approach him on personal matters; but it was necessary I transact my business without delay, and, therefore, excusing myself on the plea that I feared some vital mistake might be made if I neglected to attend to the matter, inquired concerning the advisability of asking immediately for an interview with the commander in order to arrange for the extension of Uncle Rube's parole, or, at least, to report that he was in the city under my care and pledge.

"I would not make any attempt at seeing General Hardee immediately," the colonel said, in a kindly tone. "You know full well how much he has at such a time to occupy his mind, and the matter of your having a Yankee prisoner is of but little importance compared with other business. Having notified the officers of your regiment and myself—in fact, not trying to keep the matter a secret, is sufficient to free you from censure; therefore do not attempt to take any further steps regarding the man. It is not improbable he may soon be in a position to claim protection from his friends, rather than us."

I looked at the colonel in blank amazement, for he had as much as suggested the possibility of the city's being speedily captured, or of our evacuating it.

I explained to him what I proposed to do in regard to Captain Carter's family, and he commended the idea, predicting that I would have little or no trouble in getting leave of absence, because it was not probable there would be any change in the disposition of the troops during twenty-four hours, at least.

I was heartened by his kindness, and woefully cast down by the intimation that Savannah might soon be in possession of the Yankees, for he, next to General Hardee himself, was in a position to thoroughly understand the situation of affairs.

I went on my way hurriedly, and because of the interview was emboldened to ask, when I finally succeeded in finding my captain, that both Sam Waters and I have leave of absence until the following morning, making free to repeat what the colonel had said.

I had no difficulty in gaining the desired permission, and went at once in search of the trooper, whom I found with the horses, as I had expected, for he did not attempt to cultivate the acquaintance of the men in the regiment, lest, through their questioning, it should be discovered he had deserted from the cavalry forces.

Greatly to my surprise, I saw him apparently in friendly conversation with an old negro, and heard him say as I drew near:

"Yonder is Lieutenant Yardley!"

"Some one with a message for me, Sam?" I asked, an undefined foreboding of further misfortune coming into my mind immediately, and the old darkey advanced hat in hand as he held toward me a folded

paper, discolored and crumpled, as if it had been long in his possession.

Hurriedly unfolding it, I saw that it was a letter, and at the bottom was signed the name of Dick Studley."

"Where did you get this, uncle?" I asked.

"Down yonder in de swamp, cap'n; an ossifer gib me two dollars ef I done put it in your han's," and the negro produced a Confederate note as token of his wealth.

"When did you get it?" I asked, not daring to read the written words lest I learn that Dick was yet in the city hiding, and had taken this means to claim my protection.

"Las' night, sar; de ossifer was in a pow'ful hurry, gwine through de swamp like de Yankees was arter him."

"How far were you from the city when you met him?"

"More'n seben miles, I reckon, Marse Cap'n. It done took me mostly all night to come up here. I'se been huntin' for you eber sence."

A great load fell from my mind as I thus understood that Dick had really succeeded in getting away from the city, and then I was able to read with some degree of calmness that which my friend, the enemy, had written.

The letter, worn with age, is still in my possession —a bit of brown paper, the characters traced with a lead pencil, and yet remaining at this day fairly distinct; and I copy here that which the dear lad wrote when he halted in the swamp on his flight from a shameful death, but had time to think of others, regardless of the danger which even a few moments' delay might bring upon himself:

"DEAR BOB: I was sorry to have run across you this morning, for I can well understand the disagreeable position in which you were placed. As an officer in the Confederate Army you are bound to give information concerning me, and I not only hope, but believe, you have done your duty, regardless of the ties of friendship between us, for we are friends, although enemies, are we not?

"I am well outside your lines, and have luckily come across an old negro, who is willing to carry this letter in order to gain the munificent reward of two dollars in Confederate currency. And here, in addition to relieving your mind regarding my fate, is the reason for writing:

"Shortly after you escaped so mysteriously from our army, Uncle Rube was taken prisoner by Wheeler's cavalry. It seems to me probable he may be in Savannah, for I know of no other place to which he could have been sent as prisoner, and, as a matter of course, Wheeler, riding here and there as General Kilpatrick keeps him engaged, could not afford to carry with him such encumbrances as prisoners of war. If it so be that you have the time, I beg you will look after the old man, and, if possible, see that he be kept in Savannah rather than taken to some other place, for certain it is, Bob, that our people will occupy the city within a short time.

"I know there is no need for me to urge you to do what may be in your power for Uncle Rube, and believe the information which I now give is sufficient to insure your searching for the old man.

"I wish I might have spoken with you this morning; but it was impossible, as you can well understand. God bless you, dear boy, and may the for-

tunes of war, whichever way they trend, bring you and I together once more. DICK STUDLEY."

I surprised the old negro by thrusting into his hand the few Confederate dollars which I had in my possession, and, giving no further heed to his presence, read with a note of joyous triumph in my voice, the contents of the letter to Sam.

"Well, say, how about that for good news!" Sam exclaimed, and his honest eyes literally gleamed with joy. "He didn't let any grass grow under his feet, eh? An' he's shown us that it's an easy matter to get into this town, if they want to. Here are all of our people claimin' that no one can come in or leave without permission, yet that fellow from Maine walks about pretty nigh as he pleases."

"We should be so thankful, Sam, that he found a way out, as never to complain because of possible mistakes or neglect on the part of our people."

"Ay, that I am, lieutenant, an' yet at the same time, what with the capture of Fort McAllister an' Lieutenant Studley's doin' about as he wants, I'm gettin' the idee that we are not in such bloomin' good shape as our leaders would have us believe. I reckon it's a case of seein' the Yankees in here before a great while, an' it may be that you an' I'll get a taste of a Northern prison right soon, unless they decide on shuttin' us up in the pens here."

I myself was rapidly losing all confidence in our ability to hold the city, yet I strove to convince Sam that the situation was not as desperate as it looked, until he exclaimed, with a knowing look, and yet respectfully:

"There's no need of deceivin' ourselves, lieutenant. It strikes me enough has happened since morn-

ing to show that we have been out of our reckonin' this many a day. Where's the old Yankee?"

This question brought me to a realization of the work I had on hand, and hurriedly explaining to Sam what I proposed to do, I asked if he was willing to aid me in the proposed task.

"It ain't a question of my bein' willin', lieutenant," the trooper replied. 'You give the orders, an' I'll carry 'em out so far as I'm able, bein' mighty glad of a chance to help the ladies we found on the plantation."

Within an hour from that time Captain Carter's family was settled in their temporary home, not a particularly cheerful abiding-place for women accustomed to luxury as they had been; but seeming most comfortable and inviting considering that it was situated within the limits of a city that was virtually invested by the enemy.

We first escorted the ladies from the hotel, and then, night having fully come, obliged Uncle Rube to take off his coat and vest, muffle his face with a towel as if sorely afflicted, and in such disguise hurried him out amid the throngs of excited soldiers and civilians who filled the corridors of the hotel, into the street, and thence to the new home as rapidly as possible.

Then after Sam had purchased sufficient in the way of eatables to provide what seemed like a veritable feast, and Miss Alice had given evidence of her skill as a cook, I read Dick Studley's letter aloud.

"That's a good boy," Uncle Rube said, his voice tremulous with emotion, when I had finished reading. "He should have been thinkin' only of himself, an' not stoppin' to say a word for an old man who has no claim on him. If I live to get back to

Malden, it won't be my fault if the people there don't understand that he's got the heart of an ox, an' is such a friend as you don't often run across."

The ladies had very many pleasant things to say regarding Dick, and I have no doubt but that it was the first time during the past five years that they had ever spoken in a kindly way toward a Yankee.

Take it all in all, Sam and I spent a much more pleasant evening than I would have believed, two hours previous, could have been possible, and just as we were about to take our departure Captain Carter arrived.

He had learned at the hotel of the change which we made, and approved of it heartily, as I understood by the expressions of gratitude, because of what we had done.

"I left the regiment when, under any other circumstances, it would have seemed impossible I could be absent a single hour," he said, "and for the sole purpose of doing just that which you have done, lieutenant, therefore am I again your debtor."

"I reckon the account is squared, Captain Carter, by the ladies carin' for our prisoner," I said, speaking lightly, as if the matter was of but little importance, and he replied in the same strain:

"By no manner of means, Yardley. The fact that they have the Yankee with them relieves my mind very much."

"How can that be?" I asked with something of surprise.

"Because," he said slowly and hesitatingly, "the day may not be far distant when a man from the North can protect them far better than either you or I, lieutenant."

I understood what was in his mind, and forebore

any further comment, for it was not an agreeable subject of conversation to those who had prayed so earnestly and so long for the success of the Confederate cause.

It was understood before we parted that Sam Waters and I should visit this newly-made home as often as might be possible, and Captain Carter was to do the same, therefore it surely seemed that the ladies would be cared for properly during such time as our people held possession of the city, and if it was the fortune of war that we of the South were to lose this stronghold on which, but a few hours previous, so much dependence had been placed, then we had every reason to believe Uncle Rube, making declaration of what had been done in his behalf, could save them from suffering or annoyance.

It can well be understood that this portion of the writing which I voluntarily undertook is not pleasant to one who served three long years in the army of the Confederacy, for it is but the reviewing of incompetence or ignorance on the part of some of our leaders, that served to dishearten the people of the South as nothing save the capture of the city of Richmond could have done.

The only bright moments in that portion of my life comprising the time from December 13th, in the year 1864, up to the close of the month, were when I visited Captain Carter's home, and there held pleasant converse, because we took good care to avoid any save the most general mention of our situation lest we dishearten each other.

Sam and I visited the household two or three times each day. Captain Carter came whenever it was possible for him to do so; but, being on duty at

headquarters, he found it next to impossible to get away oftener than once in twenty-four hours.

Uncle Rube, with a delicacy of feeling which causes my heart to warm to his memory even now, avoided the slightest appearance of triumph, and if he spoke of the possibility that the Yankee army would occupy the city, it was only while laying some plan for the benefit of those who had saved him from such suffering as came to our prisoners of war.

I might give in detail an account of the many visits which I paid to the Carter family during the three days following the capture of Fort McAllister, and the recital would be pleasing to those of us personally concerned; but I question if a stranger could take any interest therein.

As a matter of course an intimacy grew up even in that short time between Miss Alice and myself, such as could not have been brought about under brighter conditions, and it was as if I had already known her for a lifetime.

Then came the day when General Sherman, all his preparations made for an investment of the city, if it should be necessary, sent to our commander a formal demand for the surrender of Savannah, and this written demand, together with General Hardee's reply, was immediately made public, for the purpose, as I believed, of convincing the soldiers as well as the civilians that our position was virtually impregnable.

We in that little household read and re-read these military documents, commenting upon each word and phrase until it was possible to repeat them line for line, and because at that time they were of such vital importance to us, it pleases me to set them down

here exactly as the newspapers of Savannah gave them to us:

"Headquarters Military Division of the Mississippi.

"In the field, Savannah, Georgia, December 17, 1864.

"General William J. Hardee, commanding Confederate Forces in Savannah.

"General: You have doubtless observed, from your station at Rosedew, that sea-going vessels now come up through Ossabaw Sound and up the Ogeechee to the rear of my army, giving me abundant supplies of all kinds, and more especially of heavy ordnance necessary for the reduction of Savannah. I have already received guns that can cast heavy and destructive shot as far as the heart of your city; also, I have for some days held and controlled every avenue by which the people and garrison of Savannah can be supplied, and I am therefore justified in demanding the surrender of the city of Savannah, and its dependent forts, and shall wait a reasonable time for your answer, before opening with heavy ordnance. Should you entertain the proposition, I am prepared to grant liberal terms to the inhabitants and garrison; but should I be forced to resort to assault, or the slower and surer process of starvation, I shall then feel justified in resorting to the harshest measures, and shall make little effort to restrain my army—burning to avenge the national wrong which they attach to Savannah and other large cities which have been so prominent in dragging our country into civil war. I enclose you a copy of General Hood's demand for the surrender of the town of Resaca, to be used by you for what it is worth.

"I have the honor to be your obedient servant,

"W. T. Sherman, Major-General."

"Headquarters Department South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

"Savannah, Georgia, December 17, 1864.

"Major-General W. T. Sherman, commanding Federal Forces near Savannah, Georgia.

"GENERAL: I have to acknowledge the receipt of a communication from you of this date, in which you demand 'the surrender of Savannah and its dependent forts,' on the ground that you 'have received guns that can cast heavy and destructive shot into the heart of the city,' and for the further reason that you 'have, for some days, held and controlled every avenue by which the people and garrison can be supplied.' You add that, should you be 'forced to resort to assault, or to the slower and surer process of starvation, you will then feel justified in resorting to the harshest measures, and will make little effort to restrain your army,' etc., etc. The position of your forces (a half-mile beyond the outer line for the land-defense of Savannah) is, at the nearest point, at least four miles from the heart of the city. That and the interior line are both intact.

"Your statement that you have, for some days, held and controlled every avenue by which the people and garrison can be supplied, is incorrect. I am in free and constant communication with my department.

"Your demand for the surrender of Savannah and its dependent forts is refused.

"With respect to the threats conveyed in the closing paragraphs of your letter (of what may be expected in case your demand is not complied with), I have to say that I have hitherto conducted the military operations intrusted to my direction in strict accordance with the rules of civilized warfare, and

I should deeply regret the adoption of any course by you that may force me to deviate from them in future.

"I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

"W. J. HARDEE, Lieutenant-General."

In order that the remainder of this story shall be the better understood without the expenditure of too many words on my part, which might confuse rather than make plain, I ask permission to set down here a portion of General Sherman's report to General Grant, because it explains clearly and truly the condition of affairs, and will serve to enlighten the reader as to that which follows.

On the day after the demand for surrender General Sherman wrote to the commander of the Yankee army a detailed account of what he proposed to do, and following is a portion of it:

"Yesterday I made a demand on General Hardee for the surrender of the city of Savannah, and to-day received his answer—refusing; copies of both letters are herewith inclosed. You will notice that I claim that my lines are within easy cannon-range of the heart of Savannah; but General Hardee asserts that we are four and a half miles distant. But I myself have been to the intersection of the Charleston and Georgia Central railroads, and the three-mile post is but a few yards beyond, within the line of our pickets.

"The enemy has no pickets outside of his fortified line (which is a full quarter of a mile within the three-mile post), and I have the evidence of Mr. R. R. Cuyler, president of the Georgia Central Railroad (who was a prisoner in our hands), that the mile-

posts are measured from the exchange, which is but two squares back from the river. By to-morrow morning I will have six thirty-pound Parrotts in position, and General Hardee will learn whether I am right or not.

"From the left of our line, which is on the Savannah river, the spires can be plainly seen; but the country is so densely wooded with pine and live-oak, and lies so flat, that we can see nothing from any other portion of our lines. General Slocum feels confident that he can make a successful assault at one or two points in front of General Davis's (Fourteenth) corps. All of General Howard's troops (the right wing) lie behind the Little Ogeechee, and I doubt if it can be passed by troops in the face of an enemy. Still, we can make strong feints, and if I can get a sufficient number of boats, I shall make a co-operative demonstration up Vernon River or Washaw Sound.

"We have had dense fogs; there are more mud banks in the Ogeechee than were reported, and there are no pilots whatever. Admiral Dahlgren promised to have the channel buoyed and staked, but it is not yet done. We find only six feet of water up to King's Bridge at low tide, about ten feet up to the race-mill, and sixteen to Fort McAllister. All these points may be used by us, and we have a good, strong bridge across Ogeechee at King's, by which our wagons can go to Fort McAllister.

"In relation to Savannah, you will remark that General Hardee refers to his still being in communication with his department. This language he thought would deceive me; but I am confirmed in the belief that the route to which he refers (the Union plank-road on the South Caroline shore) is

inadequate to feed his army and the people of Savannah, and General Foster assures me that he has his force on that very road, near the head of Broad River, so that cars no longer run between Charleston and Savannah.

"We hold this end of the Charleston Railroad, and have destroyed it from the three-mile post back to the bridge (about twelve miles). In anticipation of leaving this country, I am continuing the destruction of their railroads, and at this moment have two divisions and the cavalry at work breaking up the Gulf Railroad from the Ogeechee to the Altamaha; so that, even if I do not take Savannah, I will leave it in a bad way. But I still hope that events will give me time to take Savannah, even if I have to assault with some loss. I am satisfied that, unless we take it, the gunboats never will, for they can make no impression upon the batteries which guard every approach from the sea."

CHAPTER XX

DESTRUCTION

Owing to the fact that we were in ignorance concerning the plans of General Sherman as shown in the portion of his letter to General Grant which I have copied in these pages, and because of General Hardee's brave reply to the demand for surrender made by the Yankee commander, we in Savannah were considerably heartened.

We almost persuaded ourselves that it was yet possible the enemy could be held in check, even

though McAllister had been lost to us, for it seemed certain that all available troops would be sent to our assistance without delay, and already we began to speak hopefully of that time when the invaders would be driven back with such reverses that they would be less bold in their attempts to capture our strongholds.

Sam even began to feel uneasy as he fancied that General Wheeler's division would soon be sent to our assistance, and Uncle Rube himself was a trifle disconcerted because the Yankees did not make an assault immediately.

"I ain't allowin' that Uncle Billy won't come inter this city before goin' anywhere else," the old man said to me as Sam Waters and I sat talking with him on the evening of the second day after the demand for surrender had been made; "but it strikes me he's losin' time. Somehow or another things haven't gone jest right with our army since I was took prisoner."

"It's because you ain't there to boss the job," Sam Waters suggested, and the old man replied with a smirk of satisfaction:

"Of course it ain't for me to say anythin' of that kind; but I know mighty well if I was back with the 46th once more, there wouldn't be any shilly-shallyin'. We'd come in here alone if Uncle Billy didn't give the word in time to suit us."

"Do you really believe a single regiment could enter where are fifteen thousand men to oppose them?" I asked, curious to learn how far the old man would go in his Yankee bragging.

"I wouldn't want to answer for some of the regiments I've seen in our army; but the 46th could do the trick an' never turn a hair; that is," he hastened

to add, "if I was with 'em to look after my detachment."

It sounded pleasantly familiar to hear the old man boast, and I enjoyed that visit almost as much as if I had been entertained entirely by Miss Alice.

The understanding which I had with the captain of my company was that I would not remain absent from the regiment more than an hour on any one occasion, therefore if I called upon Uncle Rube and the ladies three or four times in a day, I was not in the house overly long, since the journey to and from the encampment occupied fully one-third the leave of absence.

On this evening as we were returning from the visit of which I have just spoken, we passed squad after squad of men all marching in the direction of the harbor, and I said to Sam in a tone of mild curiosity:

"I wonder what may be goin' on at the waterfront? We have passed four or five hundred men all movin' the same way."

"I reckon a blockade-runner has slipped past the Yankee fleet, an' she has brought stores for the army."

"That can't be, else we would have seen wagons goin' in that direction. Besides, if a steamer had got in, why would it be necessary to unload her at night? Surely with all the idle men in this city the work could be done in the daytime."

"I've given up tryin' to keep track of what may be goin' on in this 'ere town, lieutenant," Sam replied with a hearty laugh. "When I first struck here I was a good deal like Uncle Rube, thinkin' it was my business to know everything that was hap-

penin'; but it didn't take long for me to work out of that trick."

I was not overly curious regarding the matter; if the men had been marching toward the defenses on the land side, then it might have been something to make us quicken our pace, since it would have looked as if General Hardee counted on at least one effort to drive the Yankees away.

"If the commander of this department thinks the city is strong enough to resist any attack which may be made, as he evidently does, then you an' I can rest easy in mind," I said cheerily, and the words had hardly been more than spoken when we came full upon the first lieutenant of my company, who was leading a score or more of men on the same road as that taken by the others we had met.

I saluted and he halted the squad, saying as he did so:

"If you had been in camp ten minutes ago I reckon this job would have fallen to you instead of me."

"What job?" I asked, with no premonition of the terrible information he had to impart.

"A detail from each regiment has been called for to destroy the navy-yard, the iron-clad Savannah, and such other property as might be of benefit to the Yankees."

"Destroy our property!" I gasped, my throat becoming dry and husky with the sudden fever of fear which assailed me.

"Yes, such is the command, and because so many men have been called for, it looks as if we were to make a clean sweep of the city," he replied in a voice no more steady than mine.

"Why, man!" I cried. "That means——"

"Ay, it means that we are to evacuate the city, or surrender, and the seemingly bold reply to the Yankees' summons was nothing more than empty words. Fancy fifteen thousand Confederate soldiers running away from Sherman's army, when they have the advantage of the defenses, and should be able to hold their own against a force at least three times as strong as that which threatens!"

Then, without waiting to hear the reply which I struggled in vain to make, the lieutenant gave the word for his men to move, and Sam and I were left there staring at each other as if we had suddenly been stricken dumb.

It was the trooper who broke the painful silence, and he cried as if nearly beside himself with rage:

"Do you reckon that man knew what he was talkin' about? What right has General Hardee, or any other officer in this 'ere country, to say we shall evacuate or surrender, when every soldier in the army counts on showin' the Yankees how he can fight?"

"It must be true, Sam," I replied, feeling that the tears were very near my eyelids. "We are to run away without strikin' any blow save this one against our own."

"This is the army I should desert from, an' I'm mightily ashamed of ever comin' into it. What are we to do?"

"What can we do, Sam, save to follow such directions as may be given, without questionin'? They tell us that soldiers must never think about an order, but obey it blindly."

"It'll be well for some of our leaders if we can be stopped from thinkin' very much about this 'ere business!" Sam cried angrily, and then, suddenly

falling silent, he marched on by my side, neither of us speaking until we were within the encampment once more.

There was little need to question my comrades regarding that which had been told me. The regimental officers remained shut up in the headquarters tent as if ashamed to show themselves, and the few men who were moving about looked careworn and sorrowful.

"Are you goin' back to tell the old man?" Sam asked as I came to a halt in front of my tent.

"I'd be ashamed to look him in the face after all I have said regardin' our ability to hold the city."

"I reckon you're right, sir. I'll go over to the stables; you will find me there if I'm needed."

He walked stiffly away, and after standing in the open air a few moments, striving in vain to make out why such a desperate step was to be taken, I went into the tent which was used in common by the captain, the first lieutenant and myself.

It was empty, and for this I was thankful. It seemed necessary I should be alone, for at such a time it would have been next to impossible to take part in any conversation, save such as might have savored of disrespect to my superior officers.

Before I succeeded in closing my eyes in slumber half a dozen heavy reports broke the stillness of the night, telling that the work of destruction had really begun, and shortly afterward I heard the orderlies summoning this company or that for duty, whereupon I stepped outside the tent, expecting some command for the captain.

No call came for me, and, curious to learn why additional men were needed when it seemed as if Sam and I had seen soldiers enough going toward

the harbor to lay waste the entire water-front, I went to headquarters, where I was so fortunate as to meet my captain just as he was coming out of the colonel's tent.

The question I asked of him was quickly answered, and then I understood that the unfortunate city was not even safe while her supposed defenders were within her borders.

"The low whites and the bolder of the slaves are rioting, having been incited to such work by witnessing the destruction of the property."

"Are we likely to be called on for duty, sir?"

"A detail was taken from our company for the work of destruction, and that is to be our share, unless the riots increase."

Overcome by the knowledge that no further effort would be made to defend the city, I was about to retrace my steps to the tent, when Sam Waters suddenly stood before me.

"Have you heard, sir, that the troops have been called on to keep order?" he asked excitedly.

"I learned such fact from the captain this very minute; but we are not likely to be ordered out, therefore you can return to your quarters."

"But the ladies, sir? What about them?"

"Do you know if there is trouble near their home?" I cried, now aroused to other thoughts than those regarding our yielding submissively to the enemy.

"No; but if there's so much of a row that four or five hundred men are needed to stop it, it's possible we might be needed."

The Carter family were not located in the more fashionable portion of the city, and yet the neighborhood was respectable; but so near the water-front, where one might guess the most serious rioting was

going on, that I was immediately alarmed concerning them.

"We'll go at once, Sam!" I cried, gripping his arm, and forcing him toward the lines.

"Won't you stop for a permit, sir?" he asked, hanging back.

"What difference does it make whether we are absent without leave or not?" I cried recklessly. "If the city is to be surrendered, we are not needed in quarters to swell the number of prisoners who capitulated before havin' raised a hand in defense."

"If you're ready to take the chances I ought er be," the trooper said grimly, and at our best pace we went cityward, never heeding the challenge of the guard, save to cry out that we were on special duty.

The soldier should have stopped us regardless of my rank, and doubtless he would have done so at almost any other time; but now every one was in such a whirl of grief and excitement that little heed was given to minor offenses.

Once outside the encampment it was possible to see the glare in the sky which told of the work of destruction which was going on, and, nearing our destination, we could hear a tumult such as betokened the presence of the rioters.

"That sounds a good deal nearer the place where we're bound than I wish it did," Sam said anxiously, and, alarmed by the words, I broke into a run, he following close at my heels with never a word until we were come within sight of the dwelling so often visited by us.

A cry of dismay burst from my lips as I saw a throng of men in front of the house, and could hear

angry cries and yells, as if a regular fight was in progress.

The idea that Uncle Rube might be in danger of personal violence had never once entered my mind until it was possible to distinguish such cries as, "Kill the whelp!" "String him up to the tree!" "Drag the miserable spy out to the works, where the Yankees can see how we serve such cattle!"

"The old man has got into some kind of trouble, an' there's no child's play about it!" Sam shouted as he dashed forward, and I, remembering my own experience not so many days before, followed the trooper at the top of my speed, fearing lest we might arrive too late.

Before we were in the midst of the rioters I could see the old man distinctly. Bare-headed, without either coat or vest, and clutching what looked like the handle of a broom, he was standing with his back to the building making a valiant fight in his own defense.

Poor though the weapon was, he had contrived thus far to keep the enemy at a reasonably respectful distance, while more than one face streaming with blood told that he had done something better than merely threaten with his tongue.

"Keep back, or I'll knock half a dozen of you into kingdom come!" he was shouting as I approached. "I tell you I'm held here as a prisoner on parole, an' it'll pay to ask Captain Carter before you go too far with your funny business!"

"Close in on him! He's nothin' but a Yank!" some one shouted, and at this Uncle Rube allowed his temper to control his tongue.

"That's all I am, only a plain, every-day Yank from Maine; but it ain't safe to push me too far, you

miserable Johnnies, or I'll show how we take care of ourselves down Malden way when a lot of miserable sneaks jest out of the woods try to be smart!"

As he spoke the old man leaped straight up in the air, alighting squarely on the head of the man nearest. I saw the broom-stick raised twice in the air, and could distinctly hear the thud of the blows as the weapon descended on the rioter's head.

Like a flash Uncle Rube was back in his former position, threatening his enemies with the club which he had given proof of being able to wield deftly, and then Sam and I dashed ourselves against the outer fringe of the mob.

"Give way here!" I shouted in a tone of command. "What is the meanin' of this attack upon a defenseless prisoner?"

"If you call him defenseless I'd like to have you take a look at my head," one of the old man's victims cried, turning upon me suddenly, but giving no signs of making way for us to pass.

"Hello, lieutenant!" Uncle Rube cried cheerily. "I was kinder allowin' you'd get 'round before this little muss had been cleaned up. The Yankee prisoner ain't made his escape yet, but I reckon it would er been mighty slim huntin' for him if these beauties had had their way."

As he spoke the old man struck another blow that caused the man who received it to stagger back with a shrill cry of pain, and I heard Sam Waters shout:

"It's no use handlin' this crowd with gloves, lieutenant. Have you got your revolver?"

"No, but my sword will answer every purpose," and stepping out from the throng in order to draw the weapon, I cried:

"Give way, you villains, or I'll cut you down without mercy!"

It was absolutely necessary for me to wound one of the rioters severely before the remainder understood that I would keep my word, and as I fought my way in toward the old man from one direction Sam Waters was making good use of his fists on the opposite side.

Uncle Rube was not the kind who remains idle when others are battling in his behalf. The broomstick rose and fell like a flail, and it was seldom he missed his aim.

"These 'ere sneaks allowed they'd hang me," he cried while thus lessening the number of the enemy. "They reckoned that forty or fifty would be enough to do me up brown, but when this dance comes to an end I'm thinkin' they'll consider quite a spell before tacklin' another Yankee, even if he is a prisoner!"

Sam Waters gained a position by the old man's side while I was yet struggling with the rioters some distance away, for I could not bring myself to kill men outright in what was really no more than a street brawl, and used the flat of my weapon when the point would have been what they deserved.

Even at this late day I feel surprised because one or more of the rioters was not armed with deadly weapons, in which case we might have paid a greater price for rescuing the old man.

As it was, and fortunately for us, those who were so eager to hang a Yankee had as arms nothing more formidable than clubs and stones, and once the three of us were standing together, it was not a difficult matter to disperse them.

We escorted the old man into the house, where Mrs. Carter and her daughter met us with every evi-

dence of alarm on their faces, and Uncle Rube said in an apologetic tone, as if he alone was responsible for the disturbance:

"I didn't allow to raise sich a rumpus, but the crazy Johnnies were bent on a row, an' it seemed like as if nothin' but a reg'lar scrimmage would satisfy 'em."

"Why did you venture out of doors?" I cried sharply, vexed, now that the more serious danger had passed, because of his having exposed himself.

"Somehow I couldn't seem to help it," the old man replied meekly. "I didn't count on their tumblin' quite so soon to my bein' a Yankee."

"You had no right to take the chances, an' particularly on this night!" I cried, growing angry because of his indiscretion.

Then it was that Miss Alice told me what the old man would have kept a secret:

"The mob were battering down the door, having threatened to do so unless we gave them money with which to buy liquor. It was not until we felt certain an entrance would soon be gained that Corporal Smart went out. We never thought they would recognize him as a Yankee, but tried to prevent him from going because of the danger that he might be killed."

"So you took it upon yourself to defend the ladies when the odds were forty to fifty to one, eh?" I cried, seizing the old man by the hand. "You are a friend indeed, an' I am no longer surprised that the 'detachment' are willin' to obey your commands without a question."

"I'm an old fool mostly all the time, an' 'specially to-night, else I'd hunted 'round for somethin' bigger'n a broomstick before tacklin' that gang," Uncle Rube

replied, as if believing an apology was needed because he had not done more execution.

"Where did you get even that?" I asked.

"He broke our only broom," Mrs. Carter said, laughing hysterically, for now that the danger had passed she was on the verge of collapse.

With each member of the family adding a bit to the story, we soon came to understand all that had happened.

As nearly as could be judged, the mob had come that way simply by chance, and not with the idea that a Yankee prisoner was in the vicinity. Probably some member of the party knew that the ladies were virtually alone, and, believing money could be extorted, had made threats.

At the outset, when the lawless gang did not number more than ten or twelve, Uncle Rube proposed that he show himself, believing the men might be frightened away, and I fancy such a move would then have had the desired effect, but Mrs. Carter, fearful lest the turbulent spirits learn that a member of the Yankee army was in the house, insisted on his remaining concealed until a positive attack was made upon the door of the dwelling, when it was no longer possible for her to restrain the old man.

"I never did count on settin' 'round an' seein' women abused, an' am gettin' a little bit old to begin now," Uncle Rube said by way of explanation at this point of the story. "If them half-crazy Johnnies had got in here, the place would have been wrecked for certain. I went out, calculatin' to hold my jaw, but when one of 'em hit me a clip under the ear with a rock, it seemed like as if my peaceableness melted right away, an' I fairly yelled. The first word hadn't much more'n left my lips when one of 'em

sings out: 'He's a Yankee! He's a Yankee! How did he get here?' Then the whole crowd of 'em come pellmell. After that I was no ways careful to keep my tongue betwixt my teeth, but gave the miserable sneaks jest as good as they sent, both by way of speech an' hard knocks."

The one fear in my mind while we were listening to this story told by fragments was that later in the night, when it would have become necessary for Sam Waters and me to take our departure, the mob, increased in size, might return to wreak their vengence upon the old man, and I was casting about to make out how the danger might be guarded against when the measured tread of soldiers was heard on the walk outside.

Running hastily to the street door, I saw a squad of perhaps thirty men, with bayonets fixed, approaching on the opposite side of the street, and without delay I went across, halting the sergeant who was in command.

"Our orders are to patrol the streets in this section, sir," the man said in reply to my question. "Some one told me there was trouble here."

"So there was, sergeant, half an hour ago. When I arrived a mob had gathered in front of yonder house, attemptin' to force an entrance because the ladies, who were alone, refused to give them money for drink. The family of Captain Carter, who is on duty here in the city, reside there. They have lately been driven from their plantation by bushwhackers, an' bein' friends of mine, I have tried to protect them in so far as was possible. I am now fearful lest some of the mob may return, an' beg that you will keep close watch over the house."

"I will do so, sir, an' promise to come this way as

often as every ten or fifteen minutes. If anything should prevent, I will send a couple of men around. These are sad times, sir."

"Indeed they are, sergeant, and to have riotin' added to the list of our sorrows seems hard."

"There won't be much riotin' done in the streets that I have been detailed to look after, that I can assure you," the man replied grimly. "The muskets are loaded with ball cartridges, an' if occasion requires we shall give 'em bullets followed by bayonets."

"Right you are, my man. Harsh treatment is the only proper medicine to deal out to such as you may have to contend with this night."

Much relieved in mind, I returned to the dwelling and explained to the family what would be done in the way of protecting them during the hours of darkness.

Then it was that Miss Alice asked the cause of the heavy reports which had been heard early in the evening, and I was forced to give the desired information:

"But what does it mean?" Mrs. Carter asked in surprise. "Why should General Hardee destroy the navy yard and the ironclad?"

"Because he counts on marchin' out of this 'ere city, marm," Uncle Rube said in a matter-of-fact tone, as if he had no special interest in the situation. "He's makin' ready to run away an' leavin' them as have been lookin' to him for safe keepin' to the mercies of sich ravenin' wolves as we Yankees are said to be."

Miss Alice gazed at me inquiringly, fear written on every feature of her face, and I replied as was necessary in order to speak only the truth:

"Uncle Rube is right. There is no longer any question but that the general intends to evacuate the city, although some believe he counts on surrenderin'."

"And you?" Miss Alice cried.

"And my husband?" Mrs. Carter added.

"We shall both be forced to obey orders."

"When is this cruel thing to be done?"

"It would seem by the occurrences of this evening as if the time was very near at hand, but unless he is keepin' his secret guarded carefully, there is no danger of our makin' a move this night. Therefore I hope to see you at least once more."

The ladies were overwhelmed with sorrow, as might have been expected, and I could summon no words which promised to comfort them, but Uncle Rube was equal to the occasion.

"You must not take on so, marm," he said soothingly to Mrs. Carter, who was weeping violently but silently. "It's one of the tricks of war, this turnin' things upside down jest when you think they're settled to please you, an' if it's the captain you're thinkin' about, why, dry your eyes, for the danger of runnin' away, as General Hardee evidently counts on, ain't to be compared with that of makin' a fight. It's only a case of not bein' where you can see him for a spell. I don't allow they'll take me with 'em, an' you shall be as safe as you would be in Malden, Maine."

"He speaks truly," I said as the old man paused. "Captain Carter will be very much relieved in mind, knowin' that you are to have such a friend at court while he is away. It will not be a difficult matter for him to send a letter across the lines. Within a week you should be able to know everything con-

cernin' him, an' how much more happily situated are you, particularly in that regard, than you would have been on the plantation."

"We shall see you again?" Miss Alice asked.

"There is little question about that. I hope to present myself in the mornin', when perhaps I may be able to give you more decided information."

"Do you have any idea where this portion of the army will go?"

"Some of our people in camp believe that General Hardee counts on joinin' General Lee, but of course that is only speculation."

I did not dare, in view of all the excitement of the night, to remain away from the encampment very long, therefore when we had discussed the matter briefly, I striving to present it in a light which would be least disheartening to the ladies, Sam and I took our departure, the trooper exclaiming when we were on the street once more:

"I'd like to give a piece of my mind to some of the Confederates in this 'ere city!"

"It's just as well for them, an' better for you, that you can't, Sam," I replied laughingly, and strange as it may seem, returned to camp feeling much less distressed in mind than when I set out, because Miss Alice, on learning that the army was about to evacuate the city, had thought first as to what might become of me.

CHAPTER XXI

SAM'S MISHAP

THE night following the destruction of our naval property and the rioting on the streets was not spent

in slumber, I dare venture to say, by either soldiers or civilians.

The streets were patrolled by a strong force until daybreak, and by that time the disorderly curs who would have benefited by our disasters were either tired or had become convinced that it would not be possible for them to work mischief.

Even though there had been no disturbance on the street, I question if we of the army would have felt inclined for slumber. There was no further question in regard to our evacuating the town. The destruction of the navy yard was sufficient to show that surrender was not contemplated, and our army of fifteen thousand would steal quietly away to do service elsewhere if the enemy failed to prevent a retreat.

As the hours wore on we who were not intrusted with the confidences of our leaders ceased to view the evacuation of the city as an irreparable blow to the Confederacy.

In trying to cheer ourselves we admitted that the commander-in-chief of all the armies and those who were assisting in conducting the war knew best whether our forces could do as good work by holding Savannah, as was possible elsewhere, and in time we came to believe that by thus allowing the Yankees to take possession of the city, we who were then there might be employed in striking a blow elsewhere, which would more than offset the loss we had sustained in the State of Georgia.

Therefore it was that before the new day was very old the majority of us had succeeded in becoming reasonably cheerful and thoroughly submissive. Many believed as strongly as before in the ability of our people to eventually whip the Yankees, while others, myself among the number, who were con-

vinced that the Confederacy was rapidly nearing its end, held our peace.

As a matter of course I paid a visit to the Carter family as soon as possible that forenoon and found them fully recovered from the fright of the previous evening.

Captain Carter had come in not more than half an hour before my arrival, and then he would have expressed his gratitude again for the services which Sam and I were so fortunate as to be able to render, but that I refused to listen.

"Now has come the time, if ever, when we of the South must hold together, doin' whatsoever we may each for the other, and without thought of bein' praised or thanked therefor," I said, speaking sincerely and from the fullness of my heart. "I am only too happy to do whatsoever I may, an' surely Uncle Rube was but battlin' for himself."

"Aye, lad," the old man replied, "but as the time passes I'm gettin' to feel mightly ashamed of what I did."

"Why?" I asked in surprise. "Do you think it would have been better had you remained under cover?"

"Not by a long chalk! I oughter gone out before I did, but even after delayin' I didn't give the sneaks the lesson they needed. The idee of me, Reuben Smart, of the 46th Maine, bein' contented to strike two or three baby blows when he should have laid a round dozen of 'em by the heels."

"I'm allowin' that those who felt the weight of your broom-stick are not inclined this mornin' to speak of their injuries lightly."

"I will see to it that he is better supplied with weapons in the future," Captain Carter interrupted,

"although there is little danger of any further trouble. A hundred men have been detailed to keep the turbulent ones in subjection."

"Have you reconciled yourself, sir, to the idea that we are to evacuate the city without having struck a blow?" I asked, coming back to that matter which was uppermost in my mind.

"I may not be fully reconciled, lieutenant, but have arrived at that state where I strive to believe that it is for the best, although one finds it difficult to see much of benefit in such a move."

"Have you any idea, sir, when we shall march out?"

"I have heard rumors to the effect that we move to-morrow. Our spies report the city as already completely invested on the north, west and south, and General Sherman has ordered one division of General Foster's command to move to Bluffton, in order to hold possession of the plank road."

"Have you heard how it is proposed we shall leave the city?"

"Across the Savannah River by a pontoon bridge, it is said, although the fact is to kept a secret lest the Yankees be prepared to cut us off."

"And no one more question, captain, that which is nearest my heart. Have you any idea where we shall be sent?"

"Because General Hardee is in command of this department, it would be no more than natural he should go to Charleston, but it is said by those who ought to know that every effort will be made to take a goodly portion of this army into Richmond. It is rumored this morning that Smith's division have declared they will not fight in South Carolina. It is the same old sore, lieutenant, which you may have

noticed throughout Georgia. Our people believe that but for Charleston, and, in fact, the entire State of South Carolina, this war would never have been begun. There are men in our army, other than those belonging to Smith's division, who wouldn't raise a hand to save the quarrelsome State from being overrun even worse than Georgia has been. General Hardee will be wise if, instead of tempting a mutiny, he allows the better portion of this force to go into Richmond, if it so be that is possible."

"In such a case we shall be likely to see plenty of fighting, sir," I suggested, and the captain replied:

"There is no question about that, lieutenant. If the Confederacy be near the end, as many believe, a decisive token will be the fall of Richmond, and to capture that city the Yankees are putting forth all their energies."

"Do you intend to leave your family here, sir?"

"Yes, and for the very good reason that there is no other course left for me to pursue. I must go out with the army, while they can do no less than remain here, and no one can say when I shall have an opportunity to make a change of quarters for them. I have proposed to Mrs. Carter that as soon as the Yankees take possession of Savannah she send some reliable person to our old home, and if the buildings have not been destroyed, move back there. I wish it might be possible that the trooper whom you picked up near Millen could be left behind, for he would be just the man to serve my purpose."

"There is no question but that it would please Sam right well if he *could* be left behind, sir," I replied, and then, thinking that no serious confidences would be violated, I told Sam's story. Therefore the captain understood the position in which the trooper

stood and the trouble which might come to him in case he was forced to rejoin the cavalry.

"Had I known this in time it is possible I might have succeeded in getting him detailed for special service," the captain said thoughtfully. "Now it is too late; after I am gone Mrs. Carter must find some one to attend to the matter."

When I parted with the family and with Uncle Rube that morning it was much like saying good-by, for many things might prevent my seeing them again before we left the city, although, as it happened, I paid two more visits before we left, but on both occasions we bade each other farewell, wondering whether we would be permitted to meet again in this world.

I did not find an opportunity to say to Miss Alice that which I desired, but a great joy sprang up in my heart when, as I shook hands with her in parting, she said in a low tone, as if unwilling others should hear:

"Surely you will find some way to send us word concerning yourself, for we shall be anxious, especially after a battle has been fought."

"An' I shall hope to hear from you," I added, whereupon she replied with a smile that haunted my memory many a long day after:

"Of course I should feel it my duty to answer any letter which might be received from Lieutenant Yardley."

That was all we two found time to say to each other, and poor as the words appear when set down coldly in black and white, because of the manner in which they were spoken I had great hopes.

When I reached the encampment on this morning I overheard some of the men speaking of an odd accident which had happened in the stables, but gave little heed to the remarks, for in such an army as ours

many are disabled through their own or another's carelessness.

On entering my tent the captain, who was lying on his cot, said:

"I suppose you have been looking after the Carter family, eh, Yardley? One of the surgeons was here searching for you a little while ago."

"A surgeon?" I repeated.

"Yes. It seems that the trooper you picked up back Millen way met with a queer mishap just after you went out, and if he pulls through with his life he'll be lucky."

"Do you mean Sam Waters?" I asked in surprise.

"Yes; he is badly hurt. One of the horses got to plunging around and fell on him, so it was reported to me. He must be hurt internally, for he is raising a good deal of blood."

It was necessary I turn sharply around lest the captain see the expression of incredulity on my face. Sam had claimed to be injured in the same manner once before and bled freely, therefore it occurred to me that this might be a similar trick, although why he should play it just now I failed to understand.

"Better go out and see the poor fellow," the captain insisted. "He seems to think you're the only military man in the army, and such mistaken belief should have its reward."

"Do you know where he is?"

"Taken to the hospital tent."

After parting with Miss Alice I was not in the mood for any of Sam's exhibitions as an actor, but in order to avoid the possibility of his being detected in the fraud it was necessary I show some concern, and this I tried my best to exhibit.

Arriving at the regimental surgeon's quarters,

where he had a tent devoted to emergency cases, I found Sam stretched out at full length on a cot, his face ghastly pale and a blood-stained handkerchief at his lips.

Surely the pallor could not have been brought about by a trick, I thought, and straightway reproached myself for having misjudged him.

The surgeon accompanied me as I went up to the bedside and asked him how he was feeling.

He could apparently reply only in a whisper, and it was necessary I bend over in order to catch the words.

"About done up, I guess, lieutenant. That brute of a horse never did know how to keep his feet."

I inquired of the surgeon how the accident had happened, and was told that as yet Sam had not been in condition to tell the story, but it was believed by those who were working nearby that his own horse, irritated by the animal standing nearest him, plunged forward, throwing Sam to the ground and striking him a severe blow on the chest.

As I have said it was the pallor of the man's face that caused me to think him seriously injured. Therefore I remained by his side, believing after all that had passed it was my duty to stay until he should be able to tell me what he wanted, and the surgeon, having other duties just then, went out, leaving us two the only occupants of the tent.

Sam looked up at me as if desiring to speak and again I bent over him, when he asked in a whisper:

"I believe as do the others, that when we move out of Savannah we'll join Wheeler's cavalry, don't you?"

"Yes, Sam; there's little doubt of that."

"But I shan't be able to go with you," and now he

spoke in a firmer tone, whereupon my suspicions were again aroused, and I asked sharply but not sufficiently loud for any one who might be on the outside to hear the question:

"Is this another game of 'possum, Sam?"

"I couldn't go back to be treated as a deserter, lieutenant," the alleged sufferer replied in a firmer voice than he had previously been able to summon.

"An' you are hurt about the same as when we were with McLaw's division?"

"I think this case is a little worse, sir. The surgeon tells me I won't be able to go with the army an' must be left here to the mercies of the Yankees."

"But how does it happen your face is so ghastly pale, Sam?"

"I swallowed a big piece of tobacco, sir, an' I'm really sick. What I'm afraid of is that I'll begin to vomit, an' that will stop the tooth from bleedin'."

"You must be a rascal by breedin', for I know you to be a right good fellow at heart," I said, not overly well pleased because of thus being forced to share in the fraud, until there came into my mind the recollection of what Captain Carter had said.

He had expressed the wish that it might be possible to have Sam Waters detailed from active service, in order that he might go back to the plantation, and, if the buildings were yet standing, to remain there with his family.

This accident, which the surgeon believed had disabled the man for military service, was most opportune, so far as the Carter family was concerned, and I had no doubt but that Sam Waters would rejoice at the opportunity of spending a certain length of time in seclusion rather than face his commander under such a charge as must be brought against him.

I would miss the fellow, for I had come to like him wonderfully, and yet my gratification at having him with Mrs. Carter and her daughters should be greater than the loneliness, for I knew they could have no more staunch and true defender than this same trooper who was so successful in his desire to be seriously disabled without overly much pain.

Therefore it was I laid before him the plan which had so suddenly come into my mind.

"Would you be willin', Sam, to go back to the Carter plantation with the ladies an' stay there, servin' them as best you might, until the captain was at liberty to take charge of his own affairs?"

"You can bet a great big dollar I would!" was the emphatic reply.

"I'll make it my business to find the captain at once, an' if he is in the same mind as that of an hour ago, we'll take steps toward havin' you given an indefinite furlough as an invalid."

"There isn't any time to be lost in that work, sir," the supposed sufferer said quickly: "Nobody knows how soon the army may leave this city, an' if I was sent to the military hospital, where the Yankees would get the handlin' of me, I might not shut their eyes quite so easy."

"You may rest assured that there'll be no delay," I replied, and then hurried away, going directly toward that quarter of the city where the Carters resided, by rarest good fortune meeting the captain before I had arrived at the house.

It will be remembered that I had already told him Sam's story, therefore it only remained to add this last successful fraud, after which I said:

"That which you proposed an' desired a few hours ago, sir, has come about. Sam is no more of an in-

valid than you or I, but he will probably seem to be sufferin' great pain until the Yankees have taken possession of the city. By setting about it at once, he could be relieved from duty an' carried to your home. Then I'll answer for it that Uncle Rube will succeed in gettin' him a pass out of the city as soon as General Sherman has marched in."

"We'll set about the business at once, lieutenant," the captain said eagerly, and so energetically did he go to work that in less than an hour we had due authority for removing the injured man from the encampment to Captain Carter's home, together with an indefinite furlough signed by General Hardee.

Good actor though Sam was, he came very near betraying himself when the captain and I entered the hospital tent with the information that an ambulance was in readiness to convey him to the Carter residence.

"You know why I have done this, Sam," the captain said in a low tone. "I am expecting that you will play fairly by me, as Lieutenant Yardley assures me shall be the case."

"Does he know all of it?" Sam asked of me, and I nodded my head, whereupon he said to the captain:

"Even if I had it in mind to do other than square, sir, you know that under the circumstances I wouldn't dare go crooked. Aside from gettin' out of a hole which I dropped into through followin' Lieutenant Yardley, it will please me above all things to do what I may for the ladies, an' if there is a buildin' left on the plantation to shelter 'em, they shall have a good home an' plenty to eat until you see 'em again."

"We'll discuss the business end of it when we have

better opportunity," the captain said, and without delay we two with apparently most tender solicitude lifted the supposedly helpless trooper in our arms, carrying him gently to the ambulance, into which we clambered as if to prevent him from being jarred too roughly when the vehicle rolled over the paved streets.

I am uncertain whether Mrs. Carter or Sam Waters was the better pleased at this latest turn of affairs; one had escaped court-martial for desertion and the other gained a servant whom she could trust, which is saying not a little in such troublous times as we of the South were experiencing.

Uncle Rube was as delighted over this proof of Sam's ability to deceive the surgeons as a child might have been with a new toy, and said in the tone of one who is giving another the best of recommendations:

"He's a rare bird, marm, is this same Sam Waters, an' if he'll turn his hand to farm-work as well as he has to trickery, your plantation will come nigh to payin' the Confederate debt, unless the bushwhackers wipe him out too soon."

"I believe it will be better for you to remain an invalid, Sam," I said. "Uncle Rube should have influence enough, or at least may bring sufficient to bear, so that you can have a pass out of the city almost as soon as Sherman enters."

"I'll attend to that end of it, Bob; don't you worry. He'll be free to come or go as he pleases, for the story of what he wants to do shall get to Uncle Billy's ears inside of four an' twenty hours after he comes into this 'ere town. The most he'll be called upon to pay for the favor is to sign a parole, an' it seems to me the members of this 'ere party have done that kind of business so often that it must be second nature by this time."

"I'll sign all the paroles they want," Sam said gleefully, the nausea caused by the tobacco having passed away, leaving him in fairly good bodily condition. "If I stick my nose into another soldier's berth, somebody may kick me the whole length of the Salkehatchie River!"

"I shall be more at ease concernin' you," I whispered to Miss Alice, "knowin' that you can soon return to your old home, where I am confident Sam will be able to afford proper protection."

"If the old home yet remains," she replied softly.

"I am hopin' that the bushwhackers contented themselves with plunderin' it. At all events, in the meanest cabin on the place you will be safer than in this city, although there is no doubt but that the Yankees will treat you with every possible consideration. Still, here you would be dependent upon charity an' there enjoyin' only your own."

"And when Lieutenant Yardley is at liberty we shall expect he will come directly to the plantation, which, but for him, might have afforded my mother, my sister and myself only a grave."

I would have said more just then, for the opportunity seemed to be favorable, but the captain, as if believing that I was only awaiting his pleasure, announced his readiness to return to camp, and I could do no less than follow, but I heard very little of what he said as we went through the streets, for there was ringing in my heart notes of most fervent thanksgiving because circumstances had taken me in the direction of the Carter plantation at the very time when I could best pave the way for an intimate and lasting friendship.

CHAPTER XXII

THE EVACUATION

And now I am come to the close of the story which I proposed to relate, for after our people had evacuated Savannah, the tale of what I knew concerning Sherman's march to the sea came to an end, and little did I believe at that time that I should again, during the same war or in another field of operations, meet those Yankees whom I called enemies but at the same time friends. Yet I did meet them, when I served with Lee at Richmond, and our exchange of friendly deeds while in the midst of hostilities did not come to an end until we of the South were forced to acknowledge ourselves beaten at every point.

On the day following Sam Waters' successful imitation of a desperately wounded man had earned for him snug quarters in the Carter household word was given for all the troops under General Hardee's command to be ready for the march, and this was but saying that we were to turn our backs upon the city which I yet believe ought to have been defended to the last.

Five o'clock in the afternoon was the time appointed for our regiment to move out, and at noon I paid what might be my last visit to the Carter household.

Although it seemed as if I had already made every preparation for departure, when it came to the final moment I found there was very much to be said.

First I had many messages for Dick Studley, which were given to Uncle Rube, and I knew full well he would repeat them as correctly as his memory per-

mitted. I wanted to assure the lad that my friendship was as great as at that moment when he saved me from painful imprisonment at Milledgeville; that while he was my avowed enemy and his people had ruined mine because of a political game in which the rank and file of the people had no part, I still cared for him as for a brother, and hoped that the day might come when, the war having been brought to an end, we two might sit down together, heeding not the color of the garments each other wore and with no sectional differences to mar the pleasure of our meeting.

I also enjoined Uncle Rube to persuade Dick to search me out in case the war was speedily closed by our defeat, for then I might be a prisoner, unable to find him. This favor I did not ask to the end that he should do me a service, but simply and solely for the pleasure of looking upon his dear face once more.

And to all the members of that famous "detachment" whose guest and host I had been I sent such words of grateful memories concerning the past as I had at my command, and assured one and all of them that it was my sincere prayer to the God of battles that they might come out of the fratricidal conflict uninjured either by bullet or sickness.

Nor did I forget that brave old fellow who left his leg at Vicksburg, and to him, when Uncle Rube's "detachment" should be safely at home in their village of Malden, I sent such words concerning myself as I believed would interest or amuse the poor cripple.

Then I charged Uncle Rube, again and again, that he make certain Sam Waters be allowed to leave the city at the earliest possible moment in order to make for the girl I had come to look upon very tenderly and for her loved ones a home where they would be

secure and comfortable. We people of the South, impoverished by the long war and by the devastating marches of the opposing armies, could no longer look forward with any hope to wealth, but the most we might expect with any assurance of receiving it was to be enabled to spend our lives in security and with the absolute necessities of life.

The old man was confident, and I believed he had good reasons for so being, that he could do all which we desired in the way of gaining General Sherman's permission for the ladies to return to the plantation and also to retain all the horses we had brought with us into the city.

Uncle Rube promised that the colonel of his regiment would bind himself that the animals were to be used only for work upon the plantation and not willingly given over to the Confederate service. With such assurances from a Union officer, I believed General Sherman would willingly allow Mrs. Carter to retain the beasts, more particularly since he had taken during the march from Atlanta so many horses that it had become necessary to shoot a large number, as he had declared in the letter which I have copied in these pages.

Then came my final instructions to Sam Waters. I advised, as Uncle Rube did, that he continue to play the part of invalid until well out of the city; that he sign such parole as might be demanded of him, and, in event of finding a habitable dwelling upon the Carter plantation, remain there closely, lest by some evil chance he fall in the way of our soldiery, and thus be taken back to the cavalry command, where so serious a charge was awaiting him.

There was no doubt in my mind that the trooper would do exactly as he promised. I knew full well

he was weary of a soldier's life, and because of the possibilities of trouble, would not leave the ladies unprotected, at least while the war continued.

Then came the final parting with the family, when but few words were spoken, because I dared not trust myself to speech, and when Alice returned the pressure which I laid upon her hand.

I was in the encampment once more, feeling almost as if I had bidden a last good-by to all who cared for me in this world, and the grief in my heart was so great that I remained silent amid the boisterous conversation of my comrades, lest I show weakness unbefitting a soldier.

Exactly at the appointed time my regiment took up the line of march, not to the beating of drums or the screaming of fifes, but in silence as those should who were turning their backs upon the women and children who had looked to them for protection.

Our flags were furled, and it needed but bands of crape around them to show that we were taking part in the last ceremonies which closed the act of secession forever, and, indeed, as events speedily showed, it was very near the end of it all for us who had hoped to establish a new nation.

Down the broad street, with none to cheer us on our way, we marched to the Savannah River, where was laid a pontoon bridge, and over that, out from the city I had hoped to take part in defending, we went, a sorry column of gloomy and dispirited men who were to strive yet a little longer in behalf of a Cause that was already lost.

THE END

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